

PlayStation®

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Official Magazine - UK

MIRROR'S EDGE

The future of PS3 starts here

GOD OF WAR III

TOMB RAIDER UNDERWORLD

CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

FINAL FANTASY XIII

RESISTANCE 2

INFAMOUS

**"KILL
THEM
ALL!"**

We play Resi 5's
amazing new
online mode

**Sony's
HUGE new
shooter**
256 players
at once?!

Why we hate the Helghast

Is Dangerous Hunts the
sickest game on PS3?

EA Sports boss grilled

Soulcalibur IV knocks out VF5
- huge review



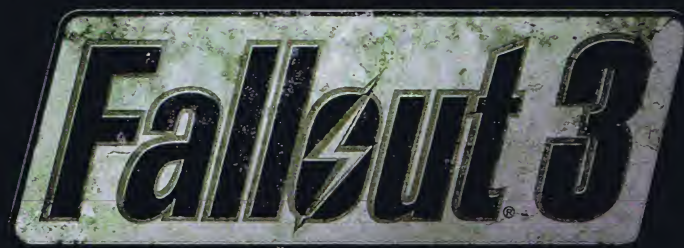
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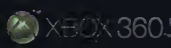
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PLAYSTATION 3



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Welcome



Games don't often paint a very alluring vision of humanity's future. Based on

what I saw at E3 – the industry's annual showcase in LA, which we report from this month – we can look forward to endless war fought out on swathes of brown mesa rock between barely distinguishable aliens/mutants/steampunk cowboys.

It was a shock to see so many me-too games chasing the same shooter dollar. But not Mirror's Edge. This is a bracingly stylish game of clean lines, dazzling blues and reflective chrome. (Has there ever been a dystopia so inviting?) And more importantly, it feels as fresh as it looks. From the moment you pick up the pad, one hold-your-breath moment follows the next.

After that first, stunning trailer, we worried a first-person/free-running game couldn't work. You'd feel sick. The controls would be too complicated. But the truth is it's instantly intuitive and very moreish. So, that's why Mirror's Edge (and the adorable Faith) is on our cover. Our job is to champion PlayStation experiences that leave you breathless. The ban on brown rock starts here...

Tim Clark Editor

tim.clark@futurenet.co.uk

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We scale the heights with Faith and go hands-on with Dice's stunning new acrobatic FPS, Mirror's Edge.

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Who we are...



Tim Clark
Editor

Spent an entire afternoon designing 'The One' in Soulcalibur IV's edit mode. Absolutely chilling.

Game of the moment
Resident Evil 5
In-game music
Dracula Family - Mogwai



Ben Wilson
Deputy editor

Left to steer the ship while the skipper was at E3. Managed to fend off Bounty-style Mutiny.

Game of the moment
Everybody's Golf World Tour
In-game music
It's Not Over - Daughtry



Leon Hurley
Commissioning editor

Wants to be a developer one day. We've decided his game will get 7. Max!

Game of the moment
Battlefield Bad Company
In-game music
Rechenzentrum - King Ant



Rachel Weber
Agenda editor

Trouble procuring a 3G iPhone on launch day led to Ratchet hitting the bottle - of fake tan.

Game of the moment
Civilization Revolution
In-game music
Heartbeats - The Knife



Nathan Ditung
Reviews editor

The cheapest, cheesiest man we've ever met. He's not much fun to play at Soulcalibur IV either.

Game of the moment
Siren Blood Curse
In-game music
Count 5 Or 6 - Cornelius



Helen Woodey
Operations editor

Demanded 33% off a dress in TopShop while pointing out tiny faults. We left before security arrived.

Game of the moment
Guitar Hero World Tour
In-game music
Trouble - Whitesnake

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On your disc



Shazam! That's right people, this month's disc is nothing short of magic. We've got Haze, the shooter where you get to play on both sides of the conflict. Also popping out of my mystical top hat is Race Driver Grid, the ferocious sim

that's currently on PS3 pole. For the finale, Guitar Hero: Aerosmith will enchant you with the power of rock. And if that isn't enough we've selected 21 of our best demos from the archives, including Burnout Paradise, Overlord: Raising Hell, Sega Superstars Tennis, The Bourne Conspiracy, and our current office favourite, the even more cute than it is addictive, Everybody's Golf World Tour.

Rachel Weber Agenda editor



Switch your PS3 on, find the Game icon on the XMB bar and then select 'OPSM - UK Blu-ray Demo 2008/22'.

Haze

The PS3 exclusive shooter with a pharmaceutical twist. Get ready for your first taste of Nectar as a Mantel super soldier, hunting Promised Hand rebels in dense jungle terrain. Load up on mad juice and experience enhanced vision and deadeye aim. Just don't let the drugs wear off.

This month's exclusive highlights...



Race Driver Grid

Speed freaks can try out the BMW 320si, Nissan Silvia and Ford Mustang GT-R Concept in time trials and international races.



Guitar Hero: Aerosmith

A bunch of classic tracks like Sweet Emotion and Walk This Way to strum to. Spandex catsuit optional.



Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Conspiracy

Multi-task as rogue agent Jason Bourne with a car chase, embassy escape and an assassination.



Overlord: Raising Hell

There's no rest for the wicked, especially when there's killing, pillaging and sheep bothering to do.



What if my disc doesn't work?

If it definitely doesn't work, send the disc to 'Disc Returns, OPM, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW' and we'll replace it. You can also email questions to opm@futurenet.co.uk. Please put 'Disc' in the subject line.

Also on the disc this month Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction, Devil May Cry 4, Uncharted: Drake's Fortune, Burnout Paradise, Need For Speed: Pro Street, Sega Rally, UEFA Euro 2008, Juiced 2, Skate, NBA Live 08, The Simpsons Game, Turok, Pro Evolution Soccer 2008, Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War, Everybody's Golf World Tour, Lost Planet: Extreme Condition, MX Vs ATV Untamed, Sega Superstars Tennis, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2008.

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about...

DC Universe

Batman and the gang go online on PS3.

► Page 12



PSN Ratchet

New adventure on the way.

► Page 16



Inside Home

Hanging out in PS3's swanky online pad.

► Page 18



King of Sing

Compo winner rules Glasto.

► Page 19

What next for Lego?

We block out some ideas. Heroes FTW.

► Page 20




1 MAG set


Meet the 256-player shooter that will change the face of online gaming

This is how it'll play out. You're guarding a military base when suddenly, on the horizon, you spot 128 soldiers legging it towards you, rifles blazing, grenades launching, tanks rolling. On your HDTV, in the confines of your living room, it's going to look like Zulu Dawn with machine guns. This is MAG – or Massive Action Game – a modern military-style FPS from Zipper Interactive, the chaps behind the SOCOM series. Somehow, they've gone and crafted a console game that can handle 256 simultaneous players on one gigantic battlefield.

But it's not just about huge lines of warriors running at each other like savages. To structure the onslaught, players will be slotted into eight-man teams, each commanded by a MAG veteran – a little like the squad system in Battlefield 2 on PC (recently streamlined for Bad Company). Details are scarce, but we understand there are various character classes – the usual selection of snipers, infantrymen and demolition experts. Players can also rank-up, earning new grades as they play, and maybe working towards commanding their



Huge armies!



Fancy maps!



Reinforcements!

to conquer all

own unit. This is tied into a wider character progression system that allows you to customise and specialise your soldier, tweaking weaponry and abilities, COD4-style.

You're in the army now

In his talk at Sony's press briefing, lead designer Andy Beaudoin mentioned that factions would be given 'ongoing campaigns' to ensure players come back on a daily basis. He also talked about the squad structure being influenced by real-life military campaigns, where small units are given specific roles, perhaps holding a key area or going ahead and placing explosives: "It's the tactical feel of a small-scale, squad-based

shooter combined with the climatic intensity of massive battles."

In the E3 trailer, which shows a siege on some kind of military-industrial compound, it looks like these eight-man squads will also be able to come together to create a major attack force. The demo shows soldiers pouring out of APCs and tanks, and later has them parachuting into the battlezone

Dev talk

"MAG will immerse players in massive online battles on a scale never before seen on a console."

Andy Beaudoin
Lead designer,
Zipper Interactive

en masse. As Beaudoin explains, "With big moments such as large scale airborne drops, helo insertions and multi-front assaults, MAG will deliver a sweeping battle experience using only real players." As for weapons, MAG has a near-future setting, and the weapons are all based on experimental or cutting edge real-world models. It looks like we'll also see a few remote control sentry guns to add some juicy risk-free fire power.

So, the war to end all wars? Let's face it, you don't call something Massive Action Game unless you're confident you can deliver the goods.

How many?

256 players. Is such a feat even possible without apocalyptic lag? If anyone can do it, it's Zipper Interactive. The Redmond-based team did, after all, produce SOCOM US Navy SEALs - one of the first online multiplayer games on PS2 - as well as SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo, which provided 16-player online fighting on PSP. These guys understand the difficulties of maintaining stable multiplayer gaming on a console network.

For all the latest updates on MAG as and when they happen, check out uk.playstation.com.



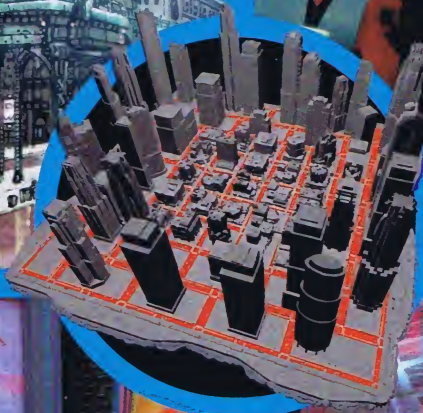
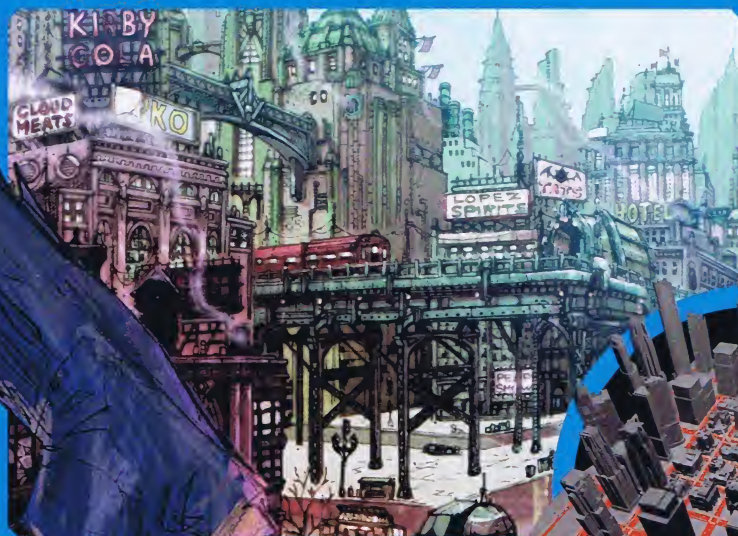
PS
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2 Save the world with Batman

...or be his biggest enemy in DC Comics' MMORPG

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



■ All the characters are rendered in a distinctive style that stays true to their paper and ink roots.



■ If you decide to fight for truth, justice and freedom, you might get an invite to the Bat Cave for tea.



You think MMO, you think elves, right? Well, scratch that. In DC Universe Online, the new superhero collaboration between Sony's Austin studio and DC Comics, the pointy-eared characters you come into contact with aren't called Flamehorn and Legwax. They're Batman, Catwoman, and Hawkman – just a slight step up in class.

DC Universe Online incorporates a similar setup to most MMO (massively multiplayer online) games. You create your own superhero, then get free rein to do pretty much what you like, good or bad. You can explore true-to-the-series locations like Metropolis and Gotham City like a stupidly overdressed tourist; you can turn yourself into a superhero vigilante and wage your own war against

anyone you come into contact with; or you can run rampant alongside (or against) DC celebrities like Aquaman, Wonderwoman, and the Dark Knight himself. Sadly there's no way to actually play as those characters, but having Batman call to offer you missions, then getting tetchy if you keep bumping him off, is very cool.

World of whatcraft?

Thankfully, it's not just the larger-than-life characters that set this apart from PC MMOs. While games

like World Of Warcraft require hours of toil to get stuck into, DCUO doesn't make you painstakingly level up before you can flash some powers. Early on we were able to choose from running at light speeds, shooting lasers from our eyes, and Superman-style flying abilities. The character progression, loot gathering, and story threads are fun from the off, and the combat is aimed at console fans instead of mouse clickers, so the whole game leans towards big, bombastic action. For instance, if you do go with the laser lenses you'll need to line them up properly to flambé your enemies. And we saw one character use his freeze powers to trap a man in a giant ice cube, before throwing him off a skyscraper. Ouch.

Visit the official site – myspace.com/dcuo – or snipurl.com/303y4 for a full list of confirmed characters.



Dev talk

"It's a fully-realised simulated-physics world – it's a visceral experience. So it's more like playing a shooter or an action game."

John Blakely
Executive producer,
Sony Online



Lucky Jim

The project's Executive Creative Director is Jim Lee, the comic book artist and publisher who founded Wildstorm Productions. He's worked as an artist on both Superman and Batman series of comics, as well as All Star Batman And Robin: The Boy Wonder with Dark Knight Legend Frank Miller.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

■ Disney Pixar's Wall-E is incredible – and you'll soon be able to download it to your PS3 in all its 1080p glory.



PS
014

3

PS3 gets movie & TV downloads

Buy and rent your favourite flicks from early 2009

Little big movies

The new functionality is compatible with PSP – so you'll be able to copy everything you buy to handheld for on-the-go viewing. Clawing at the walls with boredom on a family holiday? Retire to the bedroom with 'stomach cramps' and settle down to some Hellboy. Just for Selma. Obviously.

Cancel your lifetime subscription to Lovefilm and chuck that dog-eared Blockbuster membership card in the bin: from early next year you'll be able to both rent and buy a mass of big-name films and TV shows direct from the UK PlayStation Store. This latest addition to PSN functionality

was announced at the recent E3 trade show in Los Angeles, and brings us ever closer to the beautiful day where we only have to leave the house to meet pretty girls

and earn just enough money to get by. (Stupid capitalism.)

Sofa cinema

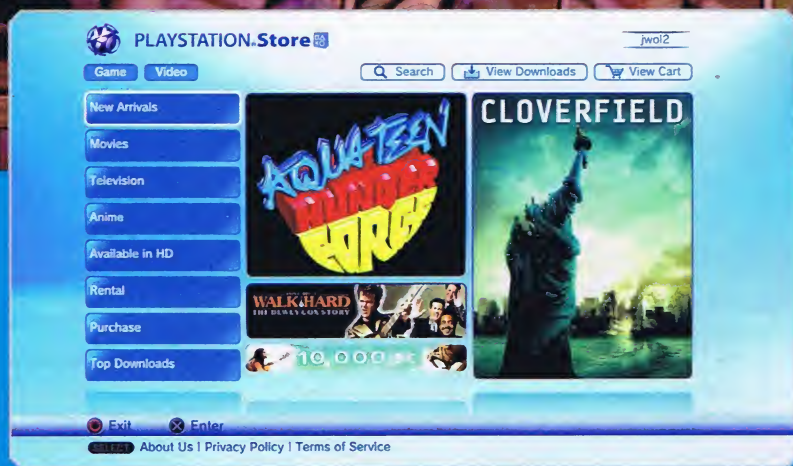
The service has just launched in the States, with around 300 films and 1,200 TV episodes immediately available to download, from beloved oldies like Rambo and Dances With Wolves to the more recent Cloverfield, Juno, and (shudder) The Spiderwick Chronicles. An impressive array of big-name studios are already on board, including 20th

Century Fox, MGM, Liongate, Warner, Walt Disney, and Paramount. That means that by the time movie downloads hit the UK in early 2009 you'll almost certainly be able to get current hits like Pixar's CG classic Wall-E and latest, greatest Batman adventure The Dark Knight piped straight to your PS3 hard drive in minutes. Not to mention an almost incomputable number of hours' worth of great telly: Among the available shows at launch in America were Family Guy, Afro Samurai,





Batman!



Film downloads like Cloverfield and Walk Hard hit the US PlayStation Store in mid-July.

Prison Break, and Buffy The Vampire Slayer. "Look, honey: I filled the hard drive with Sarah Michelle Gellar *just for you!*" One thing to note is that while you can currently access the US Store from a PAL machine, the downloads functionality (just like the ability to play NTSC Blu-rays on a UK PS3) is region locked.

The cost of love

UK prices are yet to be confirmed, but to give you an idea of what you can expect to pay it's around \$2 (£1) per TV

episode across the pond. Movies cost in the region of \$3 (£1.50) to rent for 14 days (though once you begin watching your flick you have 24 hours to finish it before the content expires), or \$10 (£5) to buy. Most content is available in both SD and HD, meaning those of you who don't yet have an HDTV (Christmas is coming, right?) will still be able to make use of the service. We'll update you on UK prices and launch titles as soon as we hear more.

Are you excited about the service? What films do you want to see on it? Tell us at opm@futurenet.com

4 The £35k jackpot

Turn your game skillz into cash prizes at PC Gamer Showdown



Until Namco decides to start forking out real money as an incentive for winning Soulcalibur IV matches online (Current ETA: 12th Of Never), being good at games is unlikely to have you sleeping on a bed of fifties any time soon. But all is not lost: your gaming skills might yet pay for a fortnight sunning yourself in the States or a couple of sexy 1080p tellies, thanks to the PC Gamer Showdown event which will take place at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire on 27-28 September.

Cash, money, chaos

With up to £35,000 in cash prizes to be won, you've never had a better opportunity to turn your finely-honed gaming expertise into real money. Don't be fooled by the name though: some of the tournaments take place on PC, but there will also be a bundle of PS3 titles for you to win cash on, like FIFA 09, Mercenaries 2 (above), and Facebreaker. And with just 500 tickets available to compete in the event, the odds on you walking away with a prime cut of that £35k are pretty high.

Tickets for the weekend are available now at pcgamershowdown.com, at a cost of £60, which includes camping. If you'd like to attend but don't fancy competing, weekend tickets cost £20, while day passes are a steal at just £7.50. Full details, including a prize breakdown, can be found at the web address above.



The Big 10

everyone's talking about



5

Ratchet's new PSN adventure

Quest For Booty to hit Store later this year

Where's Clank?

Warning: slight spoiler. Throughout Tools Of Destruction, Clank is visited by the Zoni – strange ghostly aliens that claim to know his destiny. During the game they help the little robot out, revering him like a deity, solving puzzles and giving him upgrades like wings and the rock-slicing Geo-Laser. Then, right at the end, they kidnap him claiming it's time to, "understand his purpose" leaving Ratchet all alone...

It's an inarguable fact that Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction is the best platforming adventure on PS3, so the news that another outing in the series is coming later this year means we're content like greedy little piggies. Quest For Booty isn't a full sequel but a downloadable chapter that lasts around four hours.

Most of the adventure, set on the planet Merdegrow, involves Ratchet's search for a treasure called the Fulcrum Star, linked to Clank's disappearance at the end of the last game. Ratchet's not alone, though; ladyfriend Talwyn returns

and there's a new foe in the shape of Captain Darkwater and his band of ghost pirates. Insomniac's creative director Brian Allgeier claims it's, "paced like a summer blockbuster – action, suspense, mystery and all the humour you'd expect."

Nuts and bolts

The section we played didn't even feature any guns. Instead, we tried out the new Omniwrench with its detachable head that can move objects around using a crackling energy beam. This helps Ratchet to solve puzzles or rearrange

platforms to evade hazards. You can pick up things like hot coals which smash through doors, or glowing grubs to use as torches. There are new skills, too, including swimming underwater using an oxygen mask.

Insomniac hints that you'll be able to "manipulate shadows and play tunes" to crack problems. You'll still collect bolts and upgrade weapons, but there's no word on whether you can use your upgraded arsenal from the original game. The cost is TBC, but it'll be a bargain at any price.

Quest For Booty will hit PSN this autumn, with a European Blu-ray release following soon after.



Fluffy!

■ Ol' long ears is back. But Ratchet must face a new foe without his sidekick in this downloadable episode.



6

We go Home

Insomniac takes us dancing inside PS3's virtual world

Home with PSP

While you're in Home your avatar carries around a PSP, which acts as a hub, or a remote control for the world. It makes it easy to teleport around the world, to your swanky Harbour Studio flat or straight to the location of one of your friends. Specific areas within the world of Home can even be bookmarked so you can hop straight to them later. It's also essential for decorating your apartment, swapping your wardrobe or buying up new homes like a property tycoon. You'll even be able to use it to start up multiplayer games and communicate with your PSN mates.

In our line of work we've interviewed plenty of games developers, but this is the first time we've danced flamenco with them. In a special event organised for E3 we got to take a wander around Home, Sony's Second Life-style socialising platform, and use it to chat to (and virtual boogie with) developers from Sucker Punch and Insomniac Games.

Chatting to other users is as easy as slipping on a headset and yapping away, or using Sixaxis to tap out words by hand. Typed messages appear instantly as Technicolor speech bubbles above your head, and

you can gesture with the shoulder buttons to help get your point across, whether that point is 'Where's the cinema?' or 'Check out my smoking hot moves'. It's easy to spot the noobs: they're the ones trying out all the dance styles, from hip-hop to the twist. We kept pulling shapes even as we chatted to Ryan Schneider from Insomniac Games. "It's really, really fun," he said when we asked him how he felt about being interviewed in Home, "and totally bizarre."

Make me over

Home isn't just about communication and dancing though. We found mini-games everywhere, as well as the cinema, which shows trailers from the latest games and films. As we watched a teaser for Kung Fu Panda it was easy to imagine Sony screening exclusive content on the virtual big screen. The games – such as bowling,

arcade machines and remote controlled boats – are free and dotted around the world, which should provide a great incentive to explore.

The most complicated thing about the process is creating an avatar. Each element from cheekbones to chin has a sliding scale, similar to Skate's character creation. You can then add freckles, choose a hairstyle and pick out a wardrobe. At the moment options are limited but Sony has promised plenty of choice for the fussy and fashion forward.

New clothes and hairdos aren't the only things that Sony is planning to add to the experience. You'll be able to buy furniture and decor for your virtual apartment, visit areas dedicated to specific games and show off your Trophy collection. Now all we have to do is wait for a release date.

Want to watch a video of Home in action? Then head on over to gametrailers.com/player/36631.html.



Dev talk

"I would rather ship it two years from now and have it populated by a lot of neat stuff and be competitive than open something that is a ghost town"
Jack Tretton
President, SCEA

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



7

SingStar king rules Glasto

Meet the PS3 gamer who sang at the biggest music festival of the year

"'Gulp!' is the best way to describe my reaction," says Adrian McKenzie, recalling his response to winning Sony's recent competition for the best video uploaded to My SingStar Online. His prize? Two VIP, all expenses paid tickets to Glastonbury, plus a tent and plot in the VIP camping area. Oh, and he also got to sing in front of over a thousand rowdy festival-goers...

McKenzie won after his storming version of The Hives' Hate To Say I Told You was selected by judges as the best SingStar performance. Before taking to the Queen's Head stage, McKenzie used live footage to perfect Hives lead singer Pelle Almquist's moves, and practised with a SingStar mic taped to a pole. But nailing the group's distinctive look required a little more help – that came courtesy of a professional stylist just before the gig. "I had my eyebrows thickened, cool white shoes and tie, plus black shirt and trousers provided," he explains. McKenzie was also fitted with a wig, which he

describes as giving him the appearance of "a young Paul McCartney stood in a wind tunnel".

Crowd goes wild

After all the preparation, McKenzie put on an enthralling show. "The adrenaline really kicked in as I heard the intro music booming, the compere introducing me and the crowd cheering," he says. "There were a few kung fu kicks and I put my foot on the monitor and got the crowd clapping. It was my favourite memory of the gig – seeing 1,500 people clap along. The applause at the end plus the screams were amazing. There was not one 'boo' throughout."

So does the karaoke king have any tips for aspiring wannabes wishing to claim his crown? "SingStar is about having fun regardless of whether you can sing or not. Be a good sport, and really go for it." Most importantly – don't forget the moptop wig.

To see Adrian's prizewinning performance, load SingStar and search My SingStar Online for TylerDurdin1537.

PS
019



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



■ The Lord Of The Rings

Imagine it: invisibility-related puzzles, Gandalf with Force-style magical powers and Aragorn on a first ever Lego horse. Legolas is just here so we can see him fall to bits.

PS2



The Lego games we want next

Our choices to follow Darth, Indy and Batman revealed

Bat blocks

The next game in the Lego pipeline at Traveller's Tales is Batman. It's a bright take on the DC hero's world more in line with the camp '60s TV show than the current big screen blockbuster. Expect co-op capers with Robin (and maybe bad girl Catwoman too - prrrr!) and plenty of utility belt toys to play with. Out in October.



The kitsch Lego conversion of the gaming world isn't going away any time soon. After the success of the Lego Star Wars games, which came out of nowhere and rejuvenated the fortunes of George Lucas' over-exposed sci-fi empire, the series had another hit this year with Lego Indiana Jones and looks certain to score again this Christmas with Lego Batman. So the question on our permanently smiling plastic lips isn't so much will they make another one, but what will it be?

So far developer Traveller's Tales has refused to be drawn on the details of any future titles, although they've coyly stated that they're exploring all sorts of possibilities. In a recent interview lead designer

Arthur Parsons said that the studio's acquisition by Hollywood powerhouse Warner Brothers – the two had been working together on Lego Batman – has "opened up a myriad of new opportunities".

Toy story

The hint here is that it'll now be easy for TT to get its hands on big-name Warner Bros films, and Parsons went on to say that he personally would like to see Lego versions of Mad Max and The Matrix. He also mentioned the non-Warner Bros hit Ghostbusters, which suggests that the developer is still up for making deals outside of its new corporate daddy. That's where our wish list comes in. We've made these Lego

creations of popular TV shows and films ourselves in the hope that it inspires TT to turn them into games.

Admittedly, some are less likely than others. There's a small chance that Fight Club, for instance, might skew a *little* older than your average Lego demographic, but who wouldn't pay to see Ed Norton beating blocks out of himself as a button-down office maniac? Mostly, though, we've gone for solid crowd-pleasers – Lego Gruber falling from the Nakatomi Plaza, Neo facing a thousand identical plastic Agent Smiths, Bilbo tossing the one ring into Mount Doom while co-op controlled Sam fights off Gollum...

Got any better ideas? Then send them to us at opm@futurenet.co.uk, with pictures if you can.



■ Aliens

It's hard to see past how amazing/wrong the alien would look made out of blocks, and how definitely incredible the final boss loader-suit encounter would be.



■ Star Trek

We're talking classic era, naturally, with maybe a Next Generation sequel if the first one does well. Key attractions: teleporting (of course!) and watching Kirk kick blocks out of alien ne'er-do-wells.



■ Heroes

A genuine contender – the casts' brilliantly varied superpowers (like Nathan's flying here) would make for an incredible mix-and-match co-op experience, and Mr Bennet's glasses would look awesome.



■ Fight Club

I am Jack's disaffected Lego merchandising. Hard to see where the game would go beyond emasculated block figures beating each other to bits, but where does it need to go?



■ Die Hard

Hans and McClane are the obvious reasons to remake the best action film of the '80s, but supercrazy German terrorist Kart and his Playmate Of The Year hairstyle are probably the best.



■ The Matrix

Flying! Slow motion! And, er, blindness! The biggest draw is how cool Agent Smith would look in a little Lego suit, but the huge highway fight scene is a close second.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

**SUPER
STARDUST™
HD**



Hero of Lave
Arcade - Complete planet Lave
8/7/2008, 23:24



Hero of Coventina



Hero of Nemain



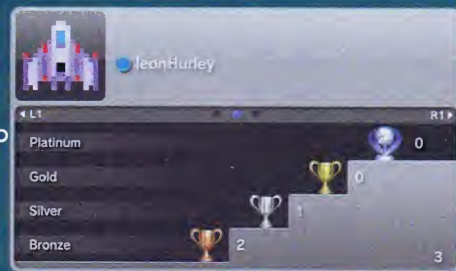
Hero of Taranis



Hero of Segomo



The Tokenizer



■ Our Leon's game-specific Trophy tally for Super Stardust.



■ And his overall Trophy count, including gamer level: 1.

Options

9

You're better than all your friends

And thanks to PS3's new Trophies system, now you have the chance to prove it

Gold Star

The first PS3 game to offer Trophies in the UK was PSN download Super Stardust HD – achievements include surviving seven minutes without dying, and collecting five power-ups in one boost. Sony has also confirmed Trophies for the games listed below. (At time of press, third party developers were yet to announce their compatible games. More news soon.)
Buzz! Quiz TV
Little Big Planet
Motorstorm Pacific Rift
NBA 09
Pain
PixelJunk Eden
Resistance 2
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs
Confrontation
Warhawk
Burnout Paradise
Uncharted:
Drake's Fortune

Despite what Nice Miss Barker has been telling us every July for the last decade, there's absolutely nothing glorious in failure. (Sorry Tim, Andy.) Winning is everything. It's why we play games in the first place, and why the lack of a 360-style achievements model (with points awarded for gaming progress) has always rankled a little with PS3 owners. But that's all changed now that firmware update 2.41 has delivered Trophies to PS3.

A winning system

Trophies enable you to compare your gaming glories with your mates, in the form of unlockable achievements. Like the Olympic medal system they range from bronze for easy tasks (finish a level in 20 minutes, score three goals in a match) through silver and up to gold (shoot x amount of men in the left eye socket, complete a level on hard using only your eyebrow as a weapon). They're arranged neatly in your XMB – and on your new-look profile cards for your friends to see – and contribute towards your gamer level, which is now the ultimate

gauge of how much you rockz00r.

The big questions now are: what's to stop people boosting their level using imported saves? And what games will be compatible?

The first one's easy, and comes down to the same reason Trophies can't be awarded retrospectively using your own saved games. To qualify, the game has to be played after the 2.41 update, and the save must originate on your profile. The second one is tougher since more Trophy-compatible games are being confirmed all the time. Sony initially said all PS3 titles would eventually be compatible, but developers – including Call Of Duty 4's Infinity Ward and Resistance's Insomniac – have thrown that into doubt by stating they have no plans for Trophy-enabling updates. But Criterion (Burnout Paradise) and Naughty Dog (Uncharted) say their games will be patched, giving you the perfect excuse to replay those classics. "Back on the boat, Mr Drake..."

For all the latest updates on Trophy support, visit the news section at uk.playstation.com.



10 Did Solid Snake get the right send off?

MGS4 veterans debate its controversial ending



Yes

Says the man with 'big guns' who gave MGS4 9.9 for IGN UK, **David McCarthy**

Solid Snake certainly got a send off. One that was silly and overblown at times. Ridiculous, even. Surely fans were expecting nothing less. But it goes past silly – I'd go so far as to say it enters the realm of great art. MGS4 takes the twisting tale that Kojima constructed over the course of the series and explains exactly what's been going on and why – erasing any suspicions you might've had that he was making it all up as he went along.

The final twist

It encompasses the very breadth of the human condition, touching on pacifism, mortality, comradeship, politics (and topical issues such as the war on terror). It even has pretensions to grandeur, recasting the entire Solid Snake saga as nothing less than the story of Christ, with themes of self-sacrifice and resurrection (even touching upon Old Testament themes like vengeance and righteous anger). It takes in every location, memorable character and musical melody of the series, from Meryl to Mei Ling, by way of Shadow Moses and Psycho Mantis, across 15 hours of sumptuously edited, amazingly acted cut-scenes that book-end action sequences that are the culmination of anything ever seen in a Metal Gear game.

Did Snake get the ending he deserved? Well he got a work of staggering genius, so yeah, I'd say so.

Think Snake's OTT send-off was a fitting finale for the great man? Email 'YES' to opm@futurenet.co.uk.



No

Says in-house MGS savant who answers to 'Little Boss' and **Paul Fitzpatrick**

Saying that Snake got the ending he deserved because the game he stars in is an incredible achievement misses the point. The real issue is not whether the series is consistently eccentric, but whether the ending of Snake's story is fitting. And while I find MGS4 transcendently good overall, Snake's long-anticipated exit criminally overshoots the perfect, heroic sweet spot by a good hour, subordinating an icon to series

creator Hideo Kojima's understandable desire to tie up every last loose end.

Time to grieve

The sad part is that the seeds for the perfect ending are sown throughout the game. As MGS4 unfolds, a battle-whipped Snake comes to accept his part in the chaos that has enveloped the world since he first took up the fight to destroy Metal Gear. He realises that removing his nemesis Liquid won't fully solve the problem. For while he, Snake, still lives, the battle will never end. And with this grim realisation Snake's heroic status shines more fiercely than ever before. What he truly deserves is oblivion, won in battle with the knowledge that he has secured victory for his allies. What he doesn't deserve is an exhausting graveside 'and finally' that while bold in its last-minute reveal, denies fans the opportunity to honour and grieve for the passing of a great character.

Reckon MGS4's climax should have been handled a little more subtly? Email 'NO' to opm@futurenet.co.uk.

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* ARTWORK SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

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New kit beamed down from the Sony mothership.

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Your gamer's guide to the month ahead.

Baddies on the couch

Dr Neil Ferguson casts an eye over our favourite bad guys



Killzone Helghast

"The Helghast lack individuality and appear to be acting as cold co-ordinated machines, rather than humans. This removes our ability to show them empathy or trust, thus the only way to deal with them is to kill or be killed."



Silent Hill Nurses

"Zombies lack the ability to reason so can be killed without guilt or shame. And the fact that she is a nurse means that by attacking us, she is acting out of role, challenging our conception of how things should be."



MGS4 Raven

"Women are normally viewed as passive victims of conflict, thus a woman aggressor challenges perceptions. Research has shown that people are hostile towards women who make this transition more heavily than males."

How to design the ultimate PS3 enemies

Creating bad guys is psychological warfare

Unless you're some kind of hippy, or only use your PS3 to play Sudoku, the chances are you've encountered hundreds of enemies. Hired goons, slaving aliens, jibbering demonic fleshsacks – each one an integral part of making its game a success. There are essential bad guy practicalities to deal with, such as AI, but there are also psychological tricks used to ensure players feel an instant urge to destroy.

For some games it's easy. In any WW2 title you know you're supposed to shoot at the men with skulls on their hats who keep saying "schnell". Endless re-runs

of the Dirty Dozen have trained your brain to recognise Nazis as evil. It's no coincidence that in the upcoming Call Of Duty: World At War, where the series is introducing a Japanese enemy for the first time, the opening scene is one of a Japanese soldier brutalising a comrade, burning out his eyes before slitting his throat. It's a quick way to establish that even though they're not the WW2 foe you're used to, they're still The Bad Guys.

The merest hint of Hitler can give developers the edge when they're dreaming up fictional characters. Dr Neil Ferguson, associate Professor of



Psychology at Liverpool Hope University explains, "when the British media want to create a new monster they still tend to endow the new enemy leader with the characteristics of Hitler, or compare their actions to the Nazi regime."

The Helghast from Killzone are a prime example of this. "We wanted to combine the feel of Cold War-era Russia with recognisable elements from the Germans of WW2," explained Roy Postma, Killzone 2's lead visual designer. "Both are strong images that invoke a feeling of menace. We used masks and goggles to dehumanize the Helghast, and added red lenses to further the effect."

Fear factor

"The image of the enemy is built up from our stereotypes and fears," says Dr Ferguson. The inhabitants of Silent Hill skip the historical context and go straight for the full-on terror. Professor Robert J Edelmann, psychologist and expert in the field of fear told us "There is a common set of objects or situations

which create fear... anything to do with medical procedures." That explains why the lurching, bubblehead nurses of Silent Hill are so memorable.

The only time these rules don't apply is in games that are tied to well-known franchises. They can skip all the deep psychology, but they have to work with people's expectations of characters. Julio Torres, producer on Star Wars: The Force Unleashed told us they've created 30 new enemies to test the Apprentice's super powers, because the old-skool stormtroopers couldn't cut it. "By mid-game, seeing a stormtrooper is almost a relief; the player can relax and just think of cool and creative ways to defeat them."

Check any review of a mediocre game and there will probably be some reference to anonymously bland bad guys, hobbling about looking unimposing. The ones we remember – the Helghast, the Chimera, Pyramid Head – are the ones that got under our skin and made us feel uncomfortable, and that's what makes beating them so satisfying.

RUMOUR MACHINE

Insider whispers

Sony will unveil the 'next generation' of SingStar at the Leipzig Games Convention in August.



Diablo 3, the hack 'n' slash MMORPG by Blizzard, will come to PS3 some time next year.



Smashing Pumpkins' lead singer Billy Corgan appears as a boss character in Guitar Hero: World Tour.

027

Rockstar is working on a new game based on a 'cool' license.

Valve's survival horror game Left 4 Dead is coming to PS3, but EA will be taking on development duties in-house.



WWE will seek a new publisher for its wrestling games when its current contract with THQ expires.

Killzone 2 will utilise similar video sharing community features to those found in Halo 3.



You ♥ Bioshock

Super fans' hearts belong to Big Daddy

PS3 owners might still be waiting for their ticket to Rapture, but Bioshock has already sparked a creative frenzy online. There's sinister art, some terrifying cosplay and even jewellery – but some fans have chosen less traditional tributes. "I saw the yellow portholes on the Big Daddy helmet and thought; I have a Lego piece like that," explained Lego sculptor Shawn Snyder. "Then I figured if I could build the head, I could do the whole body."

One Bioshock fan even managed to cause stampedes on rumour sites when he posted some of his Rapture-inspired artwork. Ben Mauro, a design student from California, posted the pieces on his blog, and the internet thought it was official concept art for Bioshock 2. "I really had fun... developing what I thought would be an interesting sequel," he told us. See his work for yourself at snipurl.com/2vui0



1 Nathan Sharratt proves he's the [big] Daddy 2 Hunter Simmons works the splicer look 3 Tiny charms from Deviantart by Bezzalair 4 Stephanie Lee plays big sis to a little daddy 5 Cyndisision is just one of the splicers lurking on Flickr 6 Shawn Snyder is the Michelangelo of Lego 7 Rangsan Srisutarm sold this scrap metal statue on Ebay 8 Marc Bollman's rabbit splicer makes us fear Easter.

It's a Norwegian mash-up of Katamari Damacy and Shadow Of The Colossus. Again, not something we expected to ever write.



Roll up, roll up

Katamari meets Colossus in the land of fan art

Steady yourself. This isn't leaked concept art for the next Team Ico game. The gorgeous Colossus meets Katamari image is, in fact, the work of Norwegian artist, Simon S. Andersen. He created the piece as a secret Santa gift. "My recipient listed a few things he was interested in and among those were Katamari and Shadow Of The Colossus."

Andersen worked on the piece for 23 days, and told us that coming up with the idea was the hardest part. "I already knew I was going to use those two games, but I needed to put them together in some clever

way." What made things trickier was that he has never played Shadow Of The Colossus. Or any of the Katamari games.

Even so, he's a dedicated gamer. When he's not playing or using them as inspiration, he's feverishly keeping up to date with new releases. "The idea is to put all this to use and make something amazing at some point." You can keep up with his creations at imson.deviantart.com/gallery. Now if we could just commission him to draw a picture of the Soulcalibur girls similarly entangled. And we're just watching.

WHO SAID THAT?

V.I.P. quotes

"I begged them to change it." **David Hayter**, the voice of Solid Snake, wasn't feeling the MGS4 ending.



"I gotta start thinking about MGS5." **Hideo Kojima**, the hardest working man in stealth.



"They [are] desensitised to crime because they're playing videogames." **Noel Gallagher** finally severs all ties with The Kids.



"He made so much from Honey, I Shrunk The Kids that he retired." Sierra's **Ben Borth** on Moranis' no-show in PS3 Ghostbusters.

OPM HOT TOPIC

What's great about working in the games biz?



Derek Littlewood
Project lead,
Free Radical Design

"Probably the lingering odour of curry and sweat that pervades the office after a late night spent finishing a build. Mmm, flavoursome..."



David Polfeldt
Vice president,
Massive Entertainment

"To work with people who are passionately obsessed with the most obscure details, people who walk that extra mile - all the time."



Dylan Cuthbert
President, Q Games

"Being able to chase your hobby and earn money while doing it."



George Wright
Assistant producer, Eidos

"The buzz of working in an exciting, evolving industry where no two days are the same. I can't imagine people like my colleagues in any other industry."



Why the Force sucks my Soul

Steve Pierce hates Darth Vader's Calibur cameo

So this is what it's come to. The boneheaded celebrity-rabies that contaminates the entire world of entertainment has finally, fatally, poisoned videogames. Soulcalibur IV includes three playable Star Wars characters in its roster. Fanboys, lie back and brace yourselves for a portion from Mr Cynical Marketer. Yum.

It's perfectly reasonable that some might relish the thought of Vader, Yoda (only on 360, thankfully) and 'Made-up guy' from the forthcoming Force Unleashed game [Starkiller - Ed] going at it sabers and tongs with the Calibur elite. But then it's perfectly reasonable to watch One Tree Hill, laugh at Alan Carr and wear Crocs. That doesn't mean it's right.

No, the Star Wars galaxy and the Soulcalibur universe shouldn't meet. It makes no sense. They're not connected. In. Any. Logical. Way. But they both "happened a long time ago", I hear from the simpleton at

canon-shattering spectacle of Raphael going at the dark lord of the Sith with his letter-opener, is for the money.

But what of creativity? What of upholding the franchises' established dogma? Yeah, what of it? Lightsabers should carve through Sophitia's shield. Darth should be able to Force-choke the tits off Ivy. 'Made-up guy' can bring a Star



At least we got Vader, and not Yoda.

"Lightsabers should carve through Sophitia's shield."

the back, "it kind of works." No it bloody doesn't. By that rationale we should expect Vader vs the Knights of the Round Table, Yoda vs Cleopatra, and 'Made-up guy' vs Little John.

Crossing the streams like this is the horribleness of pop stars playing themselves in Coronation Street, or Superman fighting Mohammed Ali, or when Julia Roberts meets (gah!) Julia Roberts in Ocean's 12. It's unnatural, it's ungodly, it's unright. Fundamentally, Wars meets Calibur is all sorts of wrong. Other than (tadahhh!) it'll make you more likely to buy it.

Horribly, grotesquely, from a marketing perspective, Wars meets Calibur works. Docile wage-pumps the world over will dutifully slop the contents of their wallets on anything with a shiny black helmet and a grill for a mouth. And that's that. So be of no doubt deluded one, the only reason, *the only reason*, we're to be treated to the

Destroyer to ground with the Force (if the promo artwork for Force Unleashed is to be believed) so he should be able to peel Lizardman with his mind, no? Oh but of course that would be unfair.

So let's have a game where lightsabers are a bit like clubs (I'm looking at you Masters of Teräs Käsi) and Force powers are stuck in a little meter that drains the more you use it - Darth is always taking a coffee break to re-charge his Force battery after all. Yeah, let's do that and invent a reason why the Jedi and Sith don't totally savage all the other characters without breaking a sweat. And let's invent a story for the packaging about how they all ended up in the same time, and place, and galaxy. But don't spend too much time on it... we've got figures that say the target demographic doesn't read much. And let's make sure Vader's big on the box. Yeah, really big. And Yoda too. 'Made-up guy', not so much.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE



Joel Snape mans up with **Scarface: The World Is Yours**

You've got to love Scarface for daring to take on GTA, and particularly for tackling the problem in the same way Tony Montana approaches America: all it's got is a massive set of balls. If you're in any doubt as to the size of Tony's cojones, there's a Balls Meter right there on-screen, tracking your atrocities and dishing out points. And it takes balls to behave the way Tony does: one minute he's chatting up Chicitas, the next he's going on a gank-fuelled chainsaw rampage. And there's a lot on his plate - not only has he got the whole town after him, but if he goes swimming for too long, he gets eaten by a shark. Tommy Vercetti's balls? Like little grapes in comparison.





Polaroid Pogo Printer

It's a pocket friendly printer for your phone. A career as a C-list celeb blackmailer is now only a Bluetooth connection away.

£100

pcworld.co.uk

First Person View RC Car

The nearest you'll get to your own MGS-style Mk 2. Use the visor to see the world from the driver's seat.

£530

gowiththeshark.com



Namco Soulcalibur Fighting Stick

Satisfyingly chunky arcade fighting stick for people who know their Yoshimitsu from their Yun-seong.

£25

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Philips Go Gear MP3 Player

Midget music box that packs in a giant 450 tracks, and voice recording tech too.

£30

shop.philips.co.uk



Sony Ericsson F305

The closest thing to the heavily rumoured PlayStation phone so far, complete with Sixaxis-style motion control.

TBA

sonyericsson.com/F305

Cassette Watch

Still refuse to dress like a grown up? Complement your oh-so-ironic 'Home taping is killing music' T-shirt with this retro-themed timepiece.

£35

asos.com



Prices and availability of products are all correct at time of going to press

Agenda

Sony

Sony Handycam HDR TG3E

Get your hands on the world's
smallest HD camcorder



£649

shop.sonymstyle-europe.com

In a nutshell

The new HDR TG3E represents prosumer technology delivered in a tiny titanium package, with Full HD recording and Dolby Digital sound. Perfect then, for shooting our Myspace zombie epic 'Midmorning Of The Dead'.

What's so special?

It's the smallest, lightest HD camcorder on the market, but it's stuffed with features to take the stress out of directing. ("Has anyone seen the fly-wrangler?") Intelligent face detection can pick out eight mugs in your image and tweak focus, exposure and colour balance.

Tell me more...

Screening your masterpiece can be done in seconds. HDMI connectivity means an easy hook up to your HDTV, or you can upload video to your PC from the 4GB Memory Stick Pro Duo and burn DVDs with one touch. Bingo, you're Ang Lee. Or, more likely, Uwe Boll.

See it

The Carl Zeiss Vario-Tessar lens means you can snap 4.0 megapixel pictures in photo mode or take 2.3 megapixel images from your HD videos.



Touch it

The master controls are a 2.7 inch LCD touch panel hidden away beneath the slick titanium. Perfect for watching yourself recreate the Goodbye Horses scene from Silence Of The Lambs.

Hear it

Automatic zoom on the microphone enhances foreground noise like dialogue, capturing the agonised cries in pressurised Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound.

The facts

1920 x 1080 Full HD recording
10x optical zoom, 120x digital zoom
Dolby Digital 5.1 channel sound
USB 2.0 Hi-Speed
CZ Vario-Tessar Lens
10x optical zoom, 120x digital zoom
HDMI output



PLAYSTATION TOP 10 CHARTS

This month's heroes and zeroes

▲ Up ▼ Down ● Non mover + New entry

PS3

- 1 ● Metal Gear Solid 4
Guns Of The Patriots
- 2 ▲ Top Spin 3
- 3 ● Beijing 2008
- 4 ▼ Battlefield Bad Company
- 5 ▼ Buzz! Quiz TV
- 6 ▲ Grand Theft Auto IV
- 7 ▲ Call Of Duty 4
Modern Warfare
- 8 ▼ The Bourne Conspiracy
- 9 ▲ Haze
- 10 ▼ Race Driver Grid

Source chart-track.co.uk

PS2

- 1 ● Lego Indiana Jones
The Original Adventures
- 2 ● Kung Fu Panda
- 3 ▲ Wall-E
- 4 ● Guitar Hero III
Legends Of Rock
- 5 ● Chronicles Of Namia
Prince Caspian
- 6 ▼ Guitar Hero Aerosmith
- 7 ▼ TT Superbikes RRC
- 8 ▼ Iron Man
- 9 ● Alone In The Dark
- 10 ▼ UEFA Euro 2008

Source chart-track.co.uk

PSP

- 1 ● Crisis Core FFVII
- 2 ● Lego Indiana Jones
The Original Adventures
- 3 ▲ Wall-E
- 4 ▼ Iron Man
- 5 + Secret Agent Clank
- 6 ▼ God Of War
Chains Of Olympus
- 7 ● Need For Speed Pro Street
- 8 ▼ The Simpsons Game
- 9 ▼ UEFA Euro 2008
- 10 ▼ Medal Of Honor Heroes 2

Source chart-track.co.uk

The PlayStation entertainment plan

Never spend a moment unfulfilled with our monthly guide

Monday
AUG 04
Get the point

Win an HDTV in our massive Vantage Point competition! See the page opposite for your chance to win. sonypictures.co.uk/movies/vantagepoint

Tuesday

Wednesday
06
Issue 22 on sale

And you're holding it right now. Enjoy our magisterial E3 coverage, then tell us which game you're tipping for the top. opm@futurenet.co.uk

Thursday

Friday
08
Youth of today

Leave your dad at the door for the Underage Festival. 14-18-year-olds rock out to The Horrors and Poppy & The Jezebels (right). underagefestivals.com/

Saturday

Sunday
10
Highland games

Top developers gather to show off their shiny new wares at this year's Edinburgh Interactive Festival. edinburghinteractivefestival.com/

11
Young blood

Two kids, one hot summer and a pirated copy of Rambo are the quirky source material for Son Of Rambo, out today on Blu-ray. sonoframbo.com


14
Sulzar heroes

Welsh nu metallers the Lostprophets play the shiny new Carling Academy in less shiny Sheffield. last.fm/event/651441

15
Maddening

Another chance to waste your first three downs then try to throw a ridiculous 'Hail Mary' as Madden NFL 2009 hits PS3. easports.com/madden09


18
Guten tag, gamers

The massive Games Convention, Europe's answer to E3, kicks off in Leipzig with big releases like COD: World At War on show. gdc.eu


22
Big red

Good news: Selma Blair is one of those "what, she's with him?" kind of girls. See the proof as Hellboy II: The Golden Army comes to UK cinemas. hellboy2movie.com

23
Oh Canada

Envy our maple syrup-slurping cousins: it's the second day of the Canadian National Gaming Expo. gameexpo.ca

24
Dirty weekend

Burn your tent and brave a final trip to the portaloos, it's the last day of the mighty Reading Festival. readingfestival.com/home

25
Lady's night

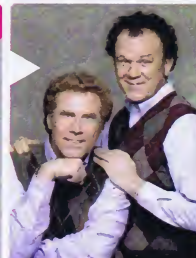
Spend the bank holiday with a beautiful Korean murderess, as super-harsh thriller Lady Vengeance arrives on Blu-ray. imdb.com/title/tt0451094


26
Wicket game

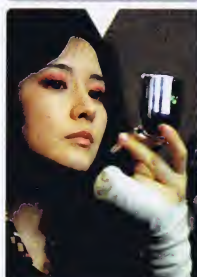
Watch the middle order melt like ice cubes in a volcano as England take on South Africa in the Natwest one-day at Trent Bridge. natwestseries.com


29
Family affair

Talladega Nights twosome Ferrell and Reilly reunite for manchild comedy 'Step Brothers'. stepbrothers-movie.com


02 September

Issue 23 on sale. Subscribe now on page 56


05
Relight my fire

Enjoy the illicit thrill of blowing buildings up as Mercenaries 2: World In Flames finally arrives on PS3. pandemicstudios.com/mercenaries

06
Wino

Wear a crash helmet to Bestival if you want to avoid Winehouse's elbow as she headlines the second night. bestival.net





Watch Vantage Point in HD

4 August
Blu-ray
on sale

Win an HDTV and Vantage Point on Blu-ray

After an assassination attempt on the US president everyone scrambles to piece together the surrounding events. As the same 23 minutes of action is retold through different perspectives, the truth is slowly revealed.

Courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment we're giving one HD hungry reader the chance to win Vantage Point on Blu-ray, and a 26" Sony HDTV to watch it on. Five runners-up will get Vantage Point on Blu-ray.

In which series does Vantage Point star
Matthew Fox play Jack Shephard?

A THE WIRE

B PARTY OFFIVE

C LOST

To be in with a chance, text using the word Point followed by a space, then your answer A, B or C followed by a space, then your name and address to 87474, or enter at futurecomps.co.uk/vpcomp22. Winners will be picked at random from all correct entries. Closing date 02.09.08.

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FIVE YEARS AGO IN OPM

This month we visit
OPS2 #37

If sticking the world-first review of **Soulcalibur II** on the cover didn't give away how much we loved the game, then the sacrilegious praise we heaped on it in the mag probably did the trick. "Capable of converting non-believers like Jesus on a good hair day," we said, as somewhere in the sky God pulled his vengeful smiley face. We awarded it 10/10, naturally, and it bagged game of the month at a canter.

Aside from the annual **Pro Evo vs FIFA** rivalry kick-off, noteworthy news came in the shapely form of **Heidi Klum**, signed up by EA to play bad girl Katya Nadanova in the forthcoming Bond adventure **Everything Or Nothing**. It also came in the rather less shapely form of the Helghast, seen for the very first time in our exclusive **Killzone** screenshots, and Brock Lesnar, lumbering in for his PlayStation debut in **Smackdown!**

Here Comes The Pain.

In previews were **Colin McRae Rally 04** ("Looks boss," we observed), **The Simpsons: Hit & Run** ("Yellow fever is here again," we joked weakly) and **SSX 3** ("shaping up to be a frost-coated classic," we correctly predicted).

Soulcalibur might have ruled the reviews section like a big bully with an extra sharp stick, but close behind was the Commies-in-New-York shooter **Freedom Fighters**. "So much to enjoy you'll end the game praying the Soviets invade LA too," we blabbed, giving it a big 9/10. All of this was in stark contrast to the shoeing handed out to **Charlie's Angels**. The miserable film tie-in was punished with a 1/10 and described by our man as stinking "like a rancid turkey shoved up a dead dog's ass". Well, when you're right, you're right.

FIVE MINUTE SKIVE

Games to play when the boss isn't looking



Desktop Tower Defence

Forget sushi getting stuck in the keyboard and fending off lecherous colleagues, here you have to defend your work space from attacking blobs using turrets and towers.

snipurl.com/2rj2x



Hell Of Sand

All the fun of the sandpit with none of the potential for making shocking buried discoveries. Draw platforms for coloured sand to cascade onto and then add effects like water, plants and... napalm?

snipurl.com/2rj48



Dino Run

Extinction sucks, but here at least get you get the opportunity to run away from your fate as a museum centrepiece. Yeah, that's right, you have to outrun the apocalypse. Good luck with that.

snipurl.com/2rj4n



www.granturismoworld.com



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HEAD TO HEAD

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THE REAL DRIVING SIMULATOR

With the power of the PS3 under the bonnet,
GT5 Prologue is our most realistic driving simulation ever.
And for the first time in Gran Turismo, race online with
up to 16 players going head to head.

This is living



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PLAYSTATION 3

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THE MASTER OF GAMES SINCE 1993

GAMES MASTER

PLAYED!

BATMAN

The Dark Knight in Lego! First hands-on!

OLYMPIC GAMING!



We show you how to win gold in your own gaming olympics!

EXCLUSIVE!

SONIC

Two new games! First ever play! We go the whole hog on PS3, Wii, 360 + DS!

REVIEW!

SOUL CALIBUR IV

The biggest review of the hottest fighter ever!



ON SALE NOW!



Preview

52

TOMB RAIDER UNDERWORLD

Lara visits Thailand, killing 15 rare spiders, 12 tropical bats and four giant iguanas while defiling a sacred tomb. Attagirl!

PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK Previews

Latest info on Planet PlayStation's hottest games

You'd better free up some time this month – there's a lot of huge games that demand your attention. Like *Resident Evil 5*. We've tried two levels, met Sheva – the new playable character – and shot a lot of angry mutants in the face. Find out what we thought over the page. Hint: we're already taking bookings in our Google calendar to make sure we have partners for the new co-op mode. Another familiar face lighting up previews is that of Lara Croft, whose triumphant return continues with *Tomb Raider Underworld* (p52) and a brand new level set in Thailand.

There's a less certain comeback in the shape of *Tekken 6* (p48). Strange new features – like Bruce Irvin's ability to poop baby chickens – make for an odd experience. The biggest upset, though, has to be *Star Wars*. Turn to page 54 to see why we're writing a strongly worded letter to George Lucas. It starts, "Dear destroyer of childhood memories..."



40 RESIDENT EVIL 5

Meet Sheva, your new partner and kicker of zombie ass in the sequel to the greatest game ever made. Don't get your hopes up though – her and Chris look pretty tight.



44 OP FLASHPOINT 2: DRAGON RISING

With real world tactics and equipment, this gives you the most realistic experience yet of dying alone in a distant country.



51 FALLOUT 3

We go hands-on with the huge post-apocalyptic shooter from the people behind *Oblivion*. Turns out you can win any argument with a personal nuke.



Preview



Classic Series **Format** PS3 **ETA** 2009 **Pub** Capcom **Dev** Capcom

Resident Evil 5

△ Co-op ○ Shootouts ⊗ Giant ◻ Moths

Three new words to consider: Maginee, Sheva and, most importantly, co-op. Resi 5's big innovation enables you to play the entire game with a mate online. The new playable character is Sheva (pronounced Shuva) Alomar. Like Chris she's a member of the crack Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance (BSAA) with the pair teaming up to investigate a parasite outbreak in an unnamed African town. Don't expect the Las Plagas, though. Infected locals (called the Maginee, although Capcom is yet to confirm the spelling) act like Resi 4's axe-wielding Spaniards but now host new parasites

which can leave their hosts and fly around like big leathery moths. Which is great. No, really, giant insect-o-bats. Lovely. Thanks.

Death row

The pair are investigating a rickety shanty town when they stumble across a man preaching to a crowd through a megaphone. As the crowd reach fever pitch an enormous executioner, wearing a blood-covered black sack over his head, steps forward and decapitates a prisoner with a huge axe. Then the crowd see Chris and Sheva and charge...

With only seconds before the

Maginee arrive, barricading the doors to the house you're in seems like a strong idea. When playing alone Sheva is computer-controlled with ○ issuing orders – so where you'd press △ to make Chris grab ammo or move objects, you can use ○ to get Sheva to do it instead. So a quick tap has Sheva pushing a bookcase across one door while Chris does the same to another. The horde, trapped outside, are then easily picked off through the windows, skulls popping everywhere like Hell's own fairground rifle range.

But the turkey shoot doesn't last. The axe-wielding giant appears, smashing through the side of the







▲ The co-op gameplay often separates you from your partner, forcing you to protect her from afar.

building. Suddenly the safe house is replaced by an open courtyard filled with villagers waving bottles, machetes and sticks. It's classic Resi 4 threat management, with you capping whoever's too close, and keeping the horde at bay with carefully placed shots. The new daylight setting certainly doesn't diminish the panic, especially as heads explode in flurries of writhing tentacles. If a villager grabs Chris, the parasite erupts from their mouth like a fleshy glove, grabbing at his face and forcing you to desperately



▲ Meet Sheva, African BSAA agent and Chris' partner for Resident Evil 5.

waggle the left stick to shake it off, or hit to call Sheva for help. Screen prompts also enable you to pull off powerful upper cuts or kicks to send attackers flying. Or, you can use the

At this stage Sheva's AI still needs tuning. It's game over if she dies, but her magpie's eye for ammo means she's constantly charging into angry crowds for a box of shells. With the axe-swinging giant capable of killing Chris with one blow rescuing her can

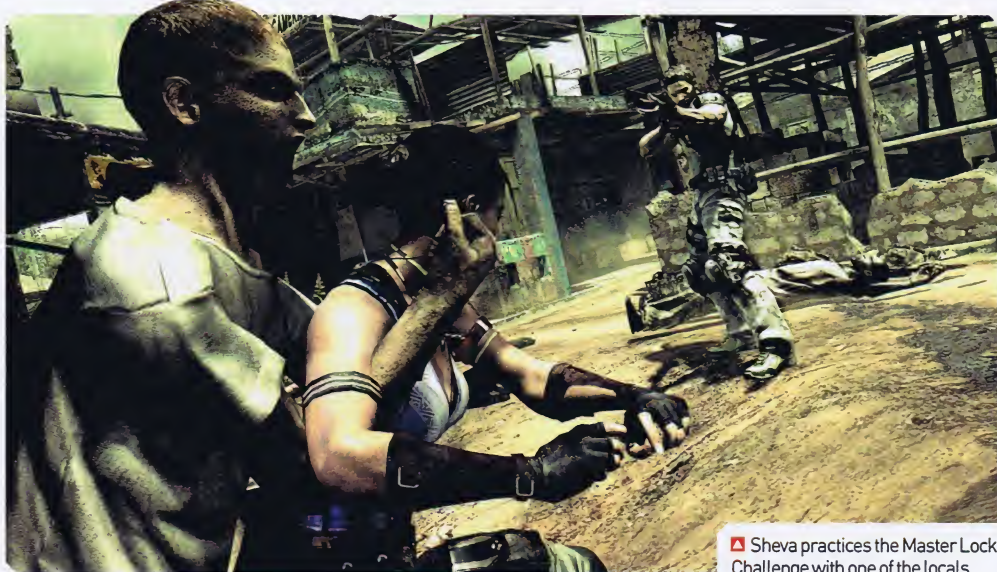
"The daylight doesn't diminish the panic, especially as heads explode..."

environment: objects like exploding barrels and electrical transformers can be blasted off pylons to electrocute anyone underneath.

be tricky. I had to 'cheat' through the attack in the end by climbing onto the rooftops while hammering to call Sheva, stopping her from wandering off. Eventually a BSAA helicopter arrives and someone who looks a lot like HUNK (the Special Forces survivor from Resi 2) blows out a gate with an RPG, opening up a route to freedom.

Do as I say

The next section provides a far better demonstration of co-op gameplay. Boosting Sheva up to a rooftop lets her provide covering fire, while Chris fights at ground level. Things get especially interesting when the path becomes blocked by a locked gate: the only way through is for Sheva to jump to the next building, via the rooftops, and then unlock the gate from the other side. As she fights her way down I provide sniper support from the adjacent building, running between



▲ Sheva practices the Master Lock Challenge with one of the locals.



▣ You can barricade rooms by pushing heavy objects across doors, although they'll be destroyed eventually.



▣ Having a friend as back up only makes things more tense. Can you really trust them to save you if things go FUBAR?



▣ Meet the latest bag-headed homicidal maniac. Hobbies include slicing things and trimming eye holes.



floors to get clear shots at the enemy. With the gate open, the final challenge is to defeat another bag-head. This time with a chainsaw. Fortunately, swapping inventory items between Chris and Sheva lets me 'borrow' her assault rifle to take him out. With the madman dispatched, my time with Resi 5 is over, leaving with me with the impression that it's essentially Resi 4.5 – an HD remake in a new setting. But then Resi 4 is one of the greatest games ever made so it's no bad thing, and the co-op is a brilliant step forward for the series. The only question now is, which of your mates do you trust to get your back?



The hook Why it's time to get excited

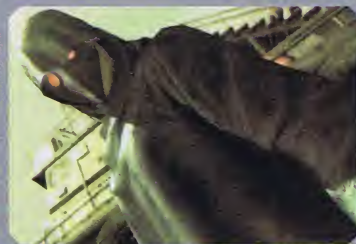
Capcom calls the African setting, 'the birthplace of the virus' – whether that's the G or T strain isn't clear. Infected people, called Maginee, vary from stick-waving simpletons to evolved forms like the masked woman who's seen driving a car for an evil-looking man. What can it all mean? That's the hook...



There's a new sun-drenched African setting.



You'll need co-op teamwork to survive.



Strange new mutants want to murderize you.



Preview



The next... Battlefield Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Codemasters Dev Codemasters

Operation Flashpoint 2

Dragon Rising

△ Deadly ○ Serious ⊗ Soldier □ Sim

Bullshot! That was the word coughed into a balled fist when these screenshots arrived. And, yes, they are 'target renders' (read: made up). But there was a similar cry when the first shots of Race Driver Grid surfaced, yet Codemasters proved the cynics wrong by delivering a racer that was every bit as hot looking as those screens promised. Bottom line: With Dragon Rising also using Grid's 'Ego' engine, the finished game should look fantastic.

One-shot kill

Op Flashpoint's shtick comes from its heritage as a tough 2001 PC shooter.

It's a hardcore military sim rather than an arcadey blaster. A single bullet can kill you, or leave you unable to move and bleeding to death. There are no medipacks or regenerating health – take a slug to the gut and you've got to get on the radio and call for medevac. (Crying for mother is optional.)

It sounds harsh, but this is to shooters what GT5 is to racers. Instead of the Nurburgring and Nissan Skylines you get Infantry squads and Skira, a real island north of Japan. Codies have taken a few liberties with the geography to create beaches, mountains, swamps, and cities, but otherwise this is as close to military

authenticity as you'll get on PS3.

Forget about small battles: Instead you'll be tackling huge vistas, taking part in military encounters where the enemy AI uses actual army data to create realistic strategy. You might be engaging infantry, sneaking recon patrols behind enemy lines, providing covering fire for retreating units or ambushing patrols. You'll also be part of a co-ordinated campaign, so as well as testing FPS action you'll get plenty of tanks, choppers, boats and other units to play with while you master real conflict tactics. If you need a new challenge after COD4, this could be it. Make Captain Price proud.



▲ "Charlie Oscar Bravo to ground control, come in. Which button's the CD player again? Over."



Quick pitch

Ultra-real

It's a realistic military sim where one bullet can kill and army data has been used for extra authenticity. Suck it up, man.

Welcome to Skira

Events are set on a real 220km island, the oil-rich Skira, off the coast of Japan and Russia.

Mission editor

Create your own single-player and multiplayer challenges.

Gun list



Tankbuster FGM-148 Javelin

A fire and forget rocket that flies straight up to penetrate a target's armour from above.



Sniper rifle M107

Nighttops
This sniper rifle is great for head shots and can take out light vehicles with explosive bullets.



LMG MK 48 MOD 0

Capable of firing 700 rounds a minute of pure American foreign policy. Great for suppressing enemy troops.



Assault rifle MK16 MOD 0

A hugely adaptable machine gun capable of supporting numerous attachments like grenade launchers.

Could Be A Contender

Hydrophobia



This one sounds like it's going to be a winner

The premise

Global warming has sunk the world, now security engineer Kate Wilson must save a floating city from terrorists.

The reality

It's a third-person survival adventure set in a rapidly sinking environment.

The hook

In two words: water physics. You've got to fight through pounding waves and deadly undercurrents, all interacting with objects and scenery in unpredictable ways.

The inspiration

Blade namechecks doom-mongering economist Thomas Malthus. We say Waterworld, but good.

The chances

If the team bases strong gaming elements around the amazing fluid dynamics this could be a real [wet] dream.

Format PS3 ETA TBC Pub TBC Dev Blade Interactive

▲ This is a huge FPS war shooter built on a ruthless military realism where you command tanks, choppers and men. Except Dave here. Dave's dead.



Source Amazon.co.uk

Pre-Orders The punters' top three



1 Star Wars The Force Unleashed

Go to the dark side as Darth Vader's secret apprentice and use your lightsaber and Force powers to wreak havoc.

Format PS3 ETA 19 September
Pub LucasArts



2 Ghostbusters The Video Game

Wallow in ectoplasm, nostalgia and Dan Aykroyd-scripted spook action as your favourite '80s movie (sorry, ET) gets a worthy adaptation.

Format PS3 ETA Oct Pub Sierra



3 SBK 08: Superbike World Championship

Four wheels are yesterday's news, apparently. Speed superbikes round the track arcade-style or test your skills in the hardcore simulation mode.

Format PS3 ETA Sep Pub Black Bean



Preview

Quick pitch

Big game

Traverse the globe's most dangerous locations using sniper rifles on exotic animals.

Killer kit

Cabela is a Nebraska-based sporting goods manufacturer selling everything from red dot sights to speed boats.

So bad it's good

Ignore the shooter looks, it's a hunt sim. And huge in the US.

Yuke's Own's 5th Anniversary **Format** PS3, PS2 **ETA** Autumn 2008 (US) **Pub** Activision **Dev** Activision

Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2009

△ Don't ○ Tell ⊗ The ⊕ RSPCA

Let's be clear about this from the off: it will almost certainly be rubbish.

At least by any conventional definition of rubbish. For a game based on shooting, there's isn't much actual action. Instead, you trudge the wilderness, scouring the horizon for endangered beasts which you can nudge closer to extinction. This is glacially slow stuff.

Stupid hunts

And yet the Dangerous Hunts series holds a strange fascination for us. There is, we're afraid, something darkly, seductively transgressive about filling the King of the Jungle with buckshot. Put that pen down. Obviously we *know* it's wrong, but it'd also be remiss of us not to keep you up to

speed with the latest developments in next-gen lion murder.

So, the new 2009 edition gets more hazardous environments, such as avalanches, piranha-infested rivers and elephant stampedes. Other confirmed animals include grizzlies and jaguars, and we're told that if a man-eater gets too close you'll have to fend it off with melee attacks. At which point, there's a chance other animals will join the rumpus.

The game's half-hearted attempt at self-justification is that you're fighting for survival as well as sport. But that's very much undermined by the 'action zone' mode, in which you mow down waves of Noah's favourites. Still, isn't this what you *really* wanted from Sony's Afrika game?



046



The Next Smackdown **Format** PS3 **ETA** May 2009 **Pub** Yuke's **Dev** THQ

UFC 2009 Undisputed

△ Punches ○ Kicks ⊗ Chokeholds ⊕ Armbars

Though Yuke's is usually associated with the theatrical antics of the WWE, the tagline for the Ultimate Fighting Championship is, 'as real as it gets,' and the Japanese developer has handed Undisputed over to its Osaka studio to build a fresh game engine from the ground up. In contrast to old UFC games, you'll be able to finish a fight in seconds (say, with a brutal flying knee) or have a five-round technical war. The key to giving UFC

2009 depth will be the ground game, and the good news is that if you're being choked out, there are all sorts of ways to reverse or counter the move.

Card girls, cut doctors, cornermen and commentator Joe Rogan are all present and correct, and with 80+ fighters – currently confirmed are B.J. Penn, Forrest Griffin, Rampage Jackson, Anderson Silva and Chuck Liddell – the roster dwarfs most other fighting games. Bring it on, indeed.



On safari Cabela's 'at risk' list



Does Mr Bear want to shake hands? Or has he got a bad paw? I can shoot it better.



Imagine your other half walks in mid-hunt. "Did I just see you kill an elephant?"



Wolfie wasn't so keen on his luxuriant pelt being used as trim for Santa's booties.



How do you stop a rhino charging? Take away his credit card. This box is over now.



UFC 2009 will capture the mixed martial arts' huge range of moves. This one's called, 'JFK airport routine security search.'



"Okay soldier, welcome to Her Majesty's topiary division."

The next Call Of Duty 3 Format PS3 ETA August Pub Ubisoft Dev Gearbox

Brothers In Arms Hell's Highway

△ Germans ○ Grenades ⊗ Green □ Grass

Like the previous instalments, this WW2 shooter's selling points are its squad-based skirmishes and Band Of Brothers-style emotional moments. But it's hard to concentrate on all that when you're wandering through fields of luminous vegetation underneath violently blue skies. It's the same old war-torn scenery, but seemingly seen through LSD-ravaged eyes. Maybe Gearbox is trying to bring something different to the genre, but does over-saturation count as a new feature?

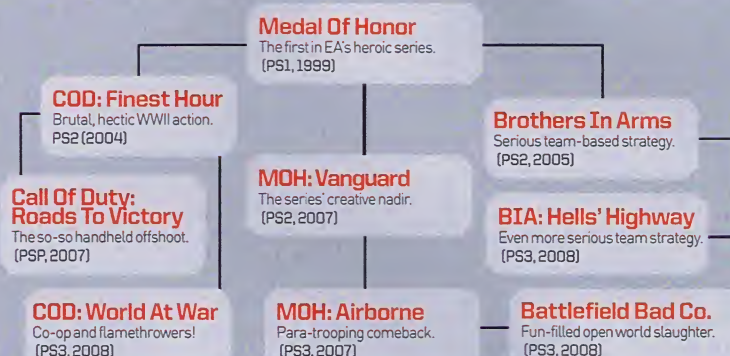
As before your squad is your most effective weapon. You order them into flanking positions, outmanoeuvre the enemy, then slip around to deliver the

killing blow. The IQ of your brave boys seems to have improved since the PS2 originals, with some rudimentary self-preservation skills and the ability to take out enemies unprompted.

Shoot for the heart

Sentiment is still being ladled on thickly – events kick off with the hero, Sergeant Matt Baker, apparently being shot by the Germans. The rest of the story is then told in fraught flashbacks via familiar characters like Sergeant Joe "Red" Hartsock and Corporal Sam Corron. COD: World At War is all about harsh realism, but it looks like Gearbox is sticking with its macho man love.

Family tree History of WW2 shooters





Preview



Tekken 6's combat is deliciously old skool.



Jin's now heading up Mishima corp.



Baek's back, although looking a bit creaky.



Leo snatches the worst-dressed crown.



Bryan's shotgun: better than chickens.



PETA loves new iterations of Tekken.



Heihachi's still out to take down Jin...



...and Jin's still feeling Devil Gene's effects.



Julia and her mum Michelle both appear.



Kazuya's now in command of G-Corp.



Wang seems to be off the booze.



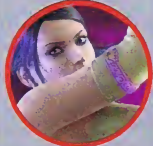
Eddie: still the clumsy button-masher's pick.



Cast list



The fatso Bob



The gypsy Zafina



The charmer Miguel



The Freak Leo

Classic Series Format PS3 ETA Winter Pub Sony Dev Namco

Tekken 6

⬆ Chickens ⬆ Footballs ⬆ Mittens ⬆ Rage

Jumping the shark? Try 'laying the chickens'. If you want a sign that the Tekken series has lost the plot, look no further than the sight of Bruce Irvin, Thai kickboxer, pausing mid-scuffle to squat out a series of tiny, feathery friends. This is one of the 'item moves', recently unlocked in the Japanese arcade cabinets where we got a chance to play it, and it's far from the most insane. Kazuya has laser-shades. Leo fires a flare gun. Paul Phoenix – wait for it – grows his hair until it's double his height. Insane.

Burning fists

Inexplicable as they are, we're pleased to report that these moves don't ruin the game – they take so long and do so little damage, that they're strictly of novelty value. More important is the

new Rage system. When your health bar is depleted enough, your fists glow red and your attacks do more damage. It's little use against Japan's elite players – once your energy's that low, they're already halfway through a combo that's going to kill you – but should come in handy during online scuffles when the game hits PS3.

Veteran players will also have to rethink their strategies. Namco claims that it's changed the frame information for every move in the game, which in practice means that a lot of combos and juggles simply don't work any more. Will the careful rebalancing work, or will part six be remembered as 'the one where Hwoarang kicks footballs at people?' We'll find out this winter.

Quick pitch

Wide open space

Environments are bigger, with more activity and variable lighting for different times of day.

Comic relief

'Item moves' include Armor King swinging a baseball bat, Nina waving a scalpel, and Ling Xiaoyu putting on a pair of furry mittens.

Dressing up

Put your fighter in hats and banners, or go 'bare chest'. (Men only.)





As with GTA IV, Rockstar has created a living, breathing city – this time it's LA.

The next... Need For Speed? Format PS3 ETA 12 September Pub Rockstar Games Dev Rockstar San Diego

Midnight Club Los Angeles

△ Rims ○ Vinylns ⊗ Spoilers □ Smog

On the streets of LA money can buy you anything. At least that's what Pretty Woman taught us. But let's say you're more interested in fat rims than fancy hookers. In Midnight Club money is no use without the rep to go with it. Building up yours will enable you to unlock new challenges and cars (like the Nissan Skyline GT-R and Chevrolet Impala SS) which you can then spend your shiny dollars on.

You can earn rep by winning races (triggered by pulling up next to other vehicles and flashing your lights), but a more exciting means of doing so is by outrunning the law. Get spotted by a cop car and they'll flag you down, at which point you can pull over and take the fine

(no chance), or boost your rep by caning it across packed freeways and through swanky gardens. Think GTA's getaways, only without the usual burial pit of pedestrians.

City of Angels

The map of LA is huge, with the ebb and flow of traffic and the day/night cycle producing a sense of authenticity that Burnout Paradise, for all its brilliance, simply couldn't create in a fictional city. Whether that will be enough for Midnight Club to

take on the genre leader remains to be seen, but it's hard not to feel a bit excited by the prospect of doing donuts on La Lohan's front lawn.



Car upgrades can be added simply by visiting mechanics' stores dotted across the city.

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ Playing the back nine

Nerves soothed by a quick round of Everybody's Golf. And by 'quick', we mean 'three days to play 18 holes, passing the pad solemnly between desks'.

▲ Feeling the 'funk

Shouldn't watching your beautifully-built bridge collapse as you press **START** in Elefunk be annoying rather than hilarious?

▲ Team Evil

Yes, Resi 5 looks a bit like Resi 4 only sunnier, but for our money it's still the most exciting prospect on PS3.

▼ God of where?

Religion's big problem? It'd be a lot easier to believe in our magical overlords if we could see them. Which is another way of saying: where the hell is God Of War III?

▼ Called out

Returning to the COD4 servers proves a chastening experience. Turns out you guys got *real* good whilst we were playing Everybody's Golf.

▼ Square FF off

Releasing Final Fantasy XIII on 360 as well as PS3 might make financial sense, but that doesn't stop us feeling like jilted brides.

Prequels Also in the series



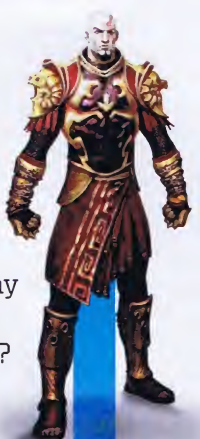
Midnight Club: Street Racing
(PS2, 2000)

Score flasher and faster rides by winning races in London and New York.



Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition
(PS2, 2005)

The first title to include real-life vehicles, created in tandem with DUB Magazine.





Preview

Quick pitch

Killer queen

Gun-for-hire Rubi is being pitched as a new breed of heroine – think Lara Croft gone mental.

Style icon

When it comes to action, Wet is about slick gymnastic moves as much as head shots.

Flexible friend

Rubi's acrobatic skills make the world your playground. Use ledges, jumps and wall-running to get around.



1

She stabs

Rubi wields twin Colt Pythons while fighting at range, but for close encounters she has a katana to ensure death is flashy and efficient. Let's hope those trousers are wipe clean.



2

She somersaults

Watching Rubi take out an enemy is like having a front row seat at the Cirque du Soleil of death. She can dash across walls and rain down attacks with super high jumps.



3

She slides

Rubi's signature move is sliding along on her knees. Yeah, like Patrick Swayze. Perfect for zooming under tables and kneecapping the target – you know, when you've absolutely, positively got to kill them during dinner.

Dark Horse **Format** PS3 **ETA** September **Pub** Sierra **Dev** A2M

Wet

△ Sexy ○ Deadly ⊗ Angry □ Bendy

She already had the looks and moves, and now Rubi has a voice to go with them. She's being voiced – sexily, huskily – by Eliza Dushku, best known for playing bad girl Faith in *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. The destruction-heavy action comes on like *Stranglehold* spliced with *Kill Bill* and *Tomb Raider*. After a simple

missing person job goes many shades of wrong Rubi, a mercenary-for-hire, is left for dead. The hunt is soon on to take out her double-crossers, visiting locations like Mexico and Hong Kong while racking up a predictably huge body count. Note to bad guys: if you're going to betray a super assassin, check her pulse before you leave?



Preview

The Next Big Thing **Format** PS3 **ETA** Autumn **Pub** TBC **Dev** Bethesda Softworks

Dev talk



"In Oblivion you can become good at everything simply through repetition. Fallout is experience point based so you really have to think about what kind of character you want to be."

Todd Howard
Executive producer,
Bethesda Softworks

Fallout 3

△ Lasers ○ Mutants ⊗ Dogs □ Perks

Okay, we get it. The future's brown. But if you are going to do barren, dystopian futures then Fallout 3 is the way to go. Twisted burnt metal, scouring winds kicking up eerie dust devils and discarded, familiar objects reminding you of the world that once was. It's Cormack McCarthy's *The Road*. Only with more guns and military issue kill-bots.

Value added (a)tax

The good news is that the RPG-style Vault-tec Assisted Targeting System

(VATS) really works, freezing time and enabling you to stack multiple attacks on specific body parts to inflict tactical damage. We targeted the leg of a flamethrower-wielding enemy to slow him down, making it easier to avoid a roasting. The system's perfect for dealing with multiple mutants as you can weigh up the odds of getting a hit against the damage caused. When not using VATS the shooting's still strong, with a COD4-style arrangement giving you precision aim on **L2** while you cap giant mutant ants with **R2**.

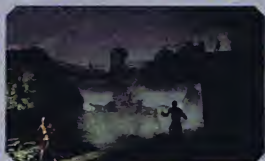
Unlike Oblivion, which lets you learn any skill by repeating it, here you earn experience points and must select specific talents to improve. There are also perks to choose that add new abilities. The non-PC Ladykiller perk inflicts 25% extra damage against female opponents while Gun Nut improves your ability to use and repair projectile weapons. The best perk we've seen, though, has to be Bloody Mess, which simply increases the showers of blood and gristle erupting when you hit an enemy. Oh yes!

PS
051

The hook It's Oblivion set in a post apocalyptic wasteland



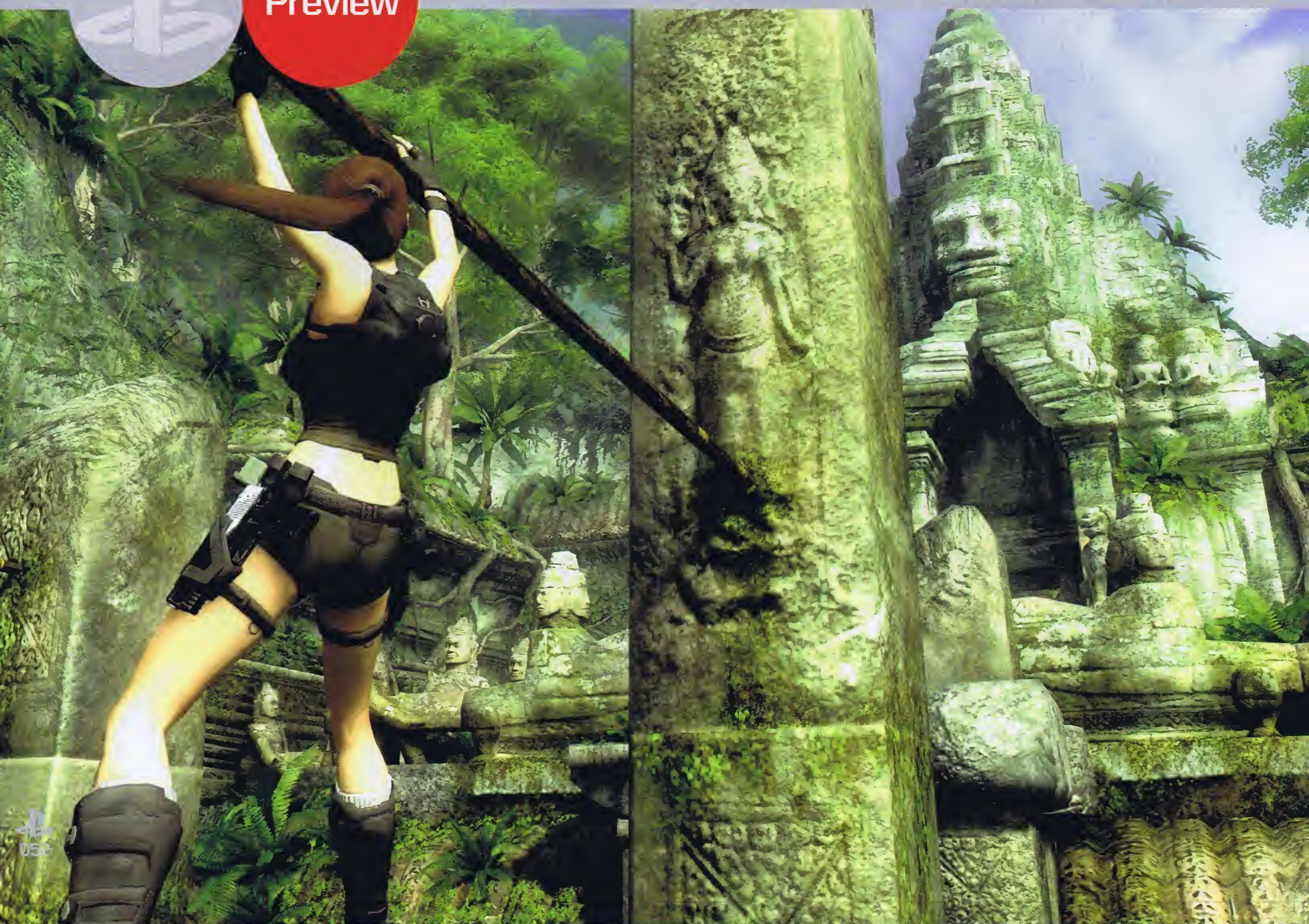
Fallout 3 has a huge derelict world to explore where you'll find old nukes to detonate and monsters to zap.



Combat mixes real-time FPS action with an RTS-style strategic system to plan out attacks on multiple opponents. Handy when huge mutant cockroaches attack in swarms.



Preview



PlayStation Icon **Format** PS3 **ETA** November **Pub** Eidos **Dev** Crystal Dynamics

Tomb Raider Underworld

△ Tigers ○ Lizards ⊗ Temples ◻ Gadgets

Mini bio The Lara lowdown



In case you've not been paying attention (tsssk!), PlayStation's pin-up is a true renaissance woman. Born in 1968, she lost her mother at the age of nine and her dad at 18, both in odd circumstances. That didn't stop her filling up an impressive CV with roles such as 'action archaeologist' – seeking trouble, treasure and truth all over the world – and as the Countess of Abbingdon.

Most people come to Thailand to party. Two minutes into her stay and Lara Croft is fending off tigers with roundhouse kicks instead. It's our first glimpse at the new level – a mossy patch of Thai wilderness full of swaying vegetation and screeching Birds Of Paradise. It's definitely atmospheric, but we're not here on a nature trail.

Lara is hunting for an artefact to help her recover Norse god Thor's war hammer, so she can save her mother who's trapped in Avalon – an island from Arthurian legend. Which is why she's in Thailand looking for a Hindu temple. (We know... but go with it.) The plot's basically an all-you-can-eat, occasionally crackpot mythological

buffet, with Lara dropping into temples and caves all over the globe on her quest to save mum.

Sight seeing

Hidden in the jungle is Shiva's temple, a huge stony monument based on Angkor Wat (a fancy temple in Cambodia). In its centre stands a statue of the four-armed deity, joined at the torso with his wife Kali. The sense of scale is awesome, and the whole structure is one giant puzzle where Lara must hunt for gems to place in Shiva's bracelets.

First we have to figure out how to navigate the crumbling pathways and ledges. It's a chance to see Lara's improved grapple hook in action as

she swings over gaps, abseils down walls, and pulls things towards her. It also provides our first experience of the game's 'adrenaline moments' – basically, slow-mo quick-time events – as part of the temple crumbles and we have to grapple out of danger.

To get further we must make use of 'portables', objects that can be carried around to solve puzzles. In this case it's a pole that has to be fastened to the wall so Lara can swing across a gap to reach a platform. We only had to find and use it once here, but in some cases it'll be something you need to use several times, adding another dynamic to the problem solving.

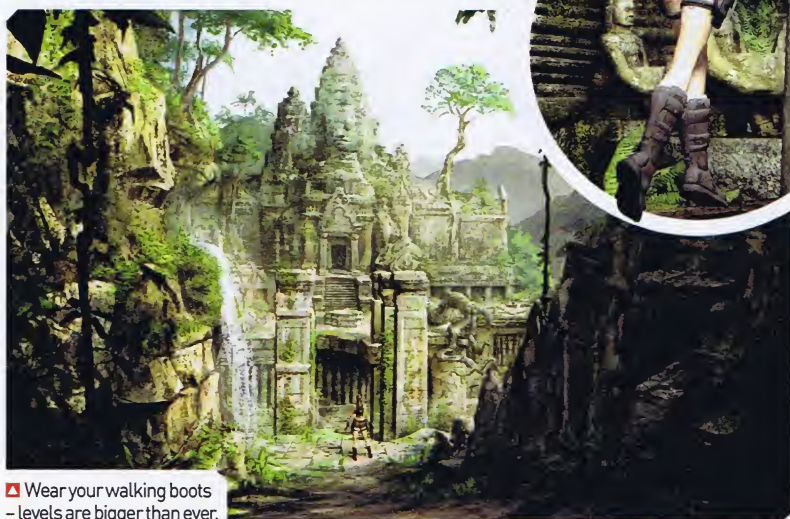
Puzzles are only part of what makes Tomb Raider special, though. You also



▲ Ever the environmentalist, Lara takes a sensitive approach to the local wildlife by shooting, kicking or squishing anything that moves.



▼ Lara's fluid movements are thanks to full motion capture.



▲ Wear your walking boots – levels are bigger than ever.



"The scale of levels could make this the most challenging Raider yet."

get to shoot local wildlife. The Thailand level is full of bats, spiders and tigers, but inside the temple we're attacked by overgrown iguana called Naga – acid-spraying lizards that protect the sacred site. In seconds, Lara's serious melee skills and twin pistols have sent two of the reptiles slithering across the floor like a pair of old handbags and

soon enough, with the area cleared and gems located, Kali's statue shifts to reveal a path deeper underground.

Handy hints

The scale of the levels could make this the most challenging Raider yet, but you'll never get truly stuck in Underworld. Lara has access to a

sonar map, which shows you a 3D render of the world, and if that wasn't enough there's an instant cop-out available in the game's menu screen, where you can access a hint or the full solution to a puzzle. It's like an internet cheat site, only you won't have to move from the sofa to access it. Another new addition to Lara's inventory is her camera. You can snap away like an excited tourist, then upload your shots and share them online.

▲ Thailand's ruins are one big climbing frame.

Even though we got to see Lara's new tech and skills in an environment that seemed vast, our adventure was actually a condensed version of a much bigger level. Crystal Dynamics claims Underworld is just too big in scale and depth for them to show it off in the space of a few hours, and says it'll need to be explored for days to appreciate fully. Which only makes us all the more excited about her return.

Dev talk



"Underworld has a level of fidelity and realism not seen in a Tomb Raider game to date. However, there is a certain level of stylisation which is synonymous with Tomb Raider. Realism isn't our goal." **Sarah Van Rompaey**
Senior producer, Eidos

Clones The games 'inspired' by Raider



Uncharted: Drake's Fortune

He might not look as good in shorts but treasure hunter and action hero Nathan Drake is Lara's spiritual successor.



Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time

The royal rogue's 3D debut was all about agility and puzzles, and instantly familiar to Raider fans.



Primal

Think Raider with added demons as brunette beauty Jennifer Tate searches for her beau in another dimension.



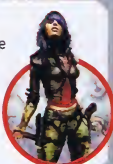
Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver

Packed with huge open areas and environmental puzzles, it reeked Raider.



Wet

Hero Rubi could be Lara's younger, madder sister. She's got the same acrobatic skills and pistol passion.





Preview



1

Force Leap
While hunting Jedi on Raxus Prime, Vader's apprentice meets Rodian scavengers and uses Force Leap to launch an attack.

2

Force Lightning
With access to dark Sith abilities, Starkiller can use Force Lightning to take out opponents from a distance.

3

Deflect the Bolt
While the Rodians have blasters, Starkiller can deflect bolts with his lightsaber before getting in a fatal blow. No dismemberment, though.

4

Lift with your knees
Using the Force lets Starkiller lift enemies struggling into the air before flinging them like Exocets at their mates.

Story so far...
Does the plot even work?



Vader finds Starkiller (George Lucas' original name for Skywalker) as a small child on Kashyyyk during the aftermath of the Great Jedi Purge. This would make him a similar age to the recently born Luke and Leia. We next see the apprentice as a young man, so events here must therefore be taking place around the time of Episode IV. Star Wars' extended universe does say several Jedi survived the Great Purge, but it's very hard to match Unleashed's numerous Jedi, advanced holodroids and 'rebel militia' with the timing of the original film.

Hype magnet **Format** PS3 **ETA** October **Pub** LucasArts **Dev** LucasArts

Star Wars The Force Unleashed

Ⓐ I Ⓞ Sense ⊗ A □ Disturbance

This is supposed to be the game in which you get to bounce a wookiee off a wall like Steve McQueen with his ball in The Great Escape. But, based on this hands-on, it's impossible to use the Force powers with any confidence. You can pick stuff up with a flick of your hand, then fling it like a missile, but the targeting system has a mind of its own, locking on to objects at random. After all the talk of "kicking ass with the Force" it turns out that "fumbling with it" is more apt.

I'm a huge Star Wars fan, but after the first four levels it felt like Lucas had snapped my replica lightsaber

over his knee. The action is basic and unengaging: You slaughter batches of bad guys, stop occasionally to move an obstacle, then repeat. It's more like an old arcade game than a next-gen experience.

Farce be with you

There are just so many things that don't work or feel right. Defeated enemies emit green health orbs, felled bodies disappear instantly and you have to constantly nursemaid the camera. Meanwhile, the invasive on-screen commentary constantly counts your score. "Stormtrooper! Slam Bonus! Destruction!" Oh God!

There's also an entirely arbitrary damage system. Some things shatter under your 'saber's blade but a lot of stuff doesn't. Sometimes, you may as well have a torch with a red sweet paper over the lens.

There is at least some potential in the core combat. Based on the moves I unlocked, the timed combo system seems identical to Devil May Cry 4 – delivering different attacks depending on the length of time you leave between button taps. So there is a chance things could get better as you discover more moves and power up abilities. So far, however, the Force is *really* weak with this one.



The Latest On...

New shots, new games, new info



FIFA 09

Format PS3 ETA September Pub EA

Yes! Building upon last year's best feature, new FIFA includes ten-on-ten Be A Pro mode, enabling you and nine buddies to kick ass (alright, waterproof leather) together online. We'll have the exclusive PS3 review next month.



Borderlands

Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub Take Two

Another shooter full of brown environments, enemies that take an eternity to die, and stupid RPG elements (Level-up your grenade carrying abilities! Er, no). Still, there's always Brothers In Arms, right? Oh.



WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania

Format PS3 ETA March 2009 Pub THQ

Amazingly, not just Smackdown with old guys. (An instant plus.) Simplified controls – stick and face buttons only – and an arcade-style 'life meter' provide a refreshing old-skool feel. Andre FTW!



LocoRoco 2

Format PSP ETA September Pub Sony

Just like the original – which is a very good thing – but now your LocoRocos can dive underwater, and the Majo Troop have learned to sing back at your bouncing blobs. A PSP must.



Rock Revolution

Format PS3 ETA Winter Pub Konami

All aboard the Rock Bandwagon. With a career mode, 40 tracks (plus DLC), co-op with axes and drums, recording studio and online scoreboards, let's hope this isn't just another dodgy cover.



NBA Live 09

Format PS3 ETA September Pub EA

Perennially the bridesmaid to NBA 2K's sweating all-star bride, downloadable 'dynamic DNA' (attributes, traits, etc) might be the feature that puts Live back at the top of the b-ball genre. *Might*.

There's more...

The latest *Ghostbusters* trailer shows off Egon (Harold Ramis) for the first time. The likeness is perfect; the judderific framerate not so hot. Let's hope it's just teething problems. Harmonix has confirmed 84 songs for the upcoming *Rock Band 2*. Our picks: cheesy '80s cut Eye Of The Tiger by Survivor, Modest Mouse's dreamlike delight *Float On*, and the ultimate mullet 'n' perm anthem, Bon Jovi's *Living On A Prayer*. German publisher CDV is bringing its PC action-RPG series *Sacred* to PS3 in the form of *Sacred 2: Fallen Angel*. CDV describes it as a cross between *Oblivion*, *Diablo II*, and *World Of Warcraft*. We'll believe that when we play it. Rey Mysterio and Chris Jericho are the latest names confirmed for *WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2009*, which is in very real danger of being outgrappled by rival game *TNA Impact*. For more on the latter see page 83. Atari has announced *N+* – the follow up to cult puzzler *N* – for PSP. A level editor, downloadable maps, and multiplayer are all promised. Namco has confirmed *Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm* for PS3. Midnight openings of *Game to mark its release* are as yet unconfirmed.

Bioshock

Format PS3 ETA November Pub Take Two

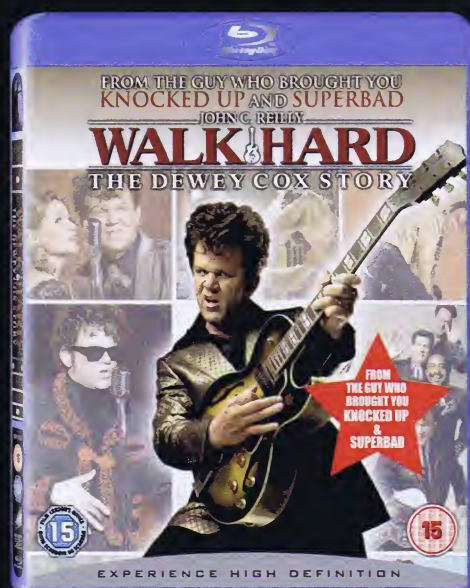
2K Boston's incredible puzzler-shooter – set in the doomed undersea city of Rapture – features PS3-exclusive downloadable content, like a standalone level in which you have to rescue a Little Sister stuck on top a ferris wheel. We also get a new difficulty setting – 'Survivor' – and Trophy support. "They're not trying to retrofit new story into the original game," said a Take Two spokesperson. "We're very, very respectful of the original experience."

▲ Plasmids enable you to alter your DNA to gain abilities like a powerful ice blast.



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1. **CODE:**
FC1



WIN A HOLIDAY TO MONTREAL, A TRIP TO UBISOFT TO PLAY FAR CRY 2 AND A 32" HD-TV!

It's the ultimate prize for any gamer – a once-in-a-lifetime chance to visit Ubisoft's award-winning Montreal studios in Canada. These talent-packed developers created Splinter Cell, Prince of Persia and Assassin's Creed and are now working on this year's PS3, Xbox 360 and PC blockbuster Far Cry 2.

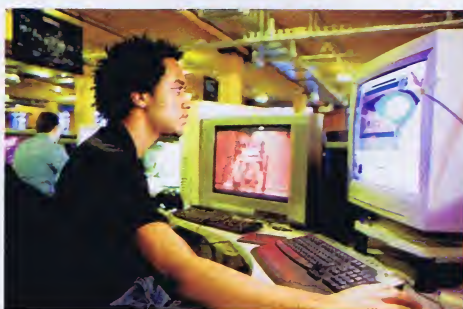
Set in 50 square kilometres of open African savannah and jungle, Far Cry 2 could even surpass the original game by delivering what should be some of the most realistic environments and amazing effects seen in a first-person shooter.

This prize will allow one lucky winner to fly to Montreal and find out exactly how it's all been achieved. If chosen, you and a friend will be flown to Montreal, stay in a 3 star hotel for two nights, spend time at the game studio, meet Far Cry 2's creators and be among the first lucky people in the world to actually play the game months before its release for the rest of us. As if that's not enough, when you get home there'll be a 32" HD-TV waiting for you.

To win, simply answer this question and text FC1, a space and either A, B or C to 87474 (cost £1.50 plus standard charge) or enter online at www.futurecomps.co.uk/fc1. Closing date is 30 August.

Where is Far Cry 2 set?

- a) Africa
- b) India
- c) Australia



2. **WIN IT!**
CODE: LIJ2

LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES

Win a treasure trove of goodies to celebrate the launch of Lego: Indiana Jones, including the game, special edition Lego merchandise and ten more Activision games. **What was the name of Indiana Jones' kid sidekick in the Temple of Doom?**

- a) Short Round
- b) Young Indiana Jones
- c) Willie

Text LIJ2, space and either A, B or C to 87474 (cost 50p) or go to: www.futurecomps.co.uk/lij2



3. **WIN IT!**
CODE: RDG3

RACE DRIVER: GRID

Be quick off the starting line (or at least, on your phone) and you could be among the first to be playing the super-realistic Race Driver: GRID on your console. We've got five copies to give away to five lucky winners.

Which of these is a famous annual sports car race held in France?

- a) The Grand National
- b) Le Mans 24 Hours
- c) Tour De France

Text RDG3, space and either A, B or C to 87474 (cost 50p) or go to: www.futurecomps.co.uk/rdg3



4. **WIN IT!**
CODE: TCON4

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: PRINCE CASPIAN

Revisit Narnia in Prince Caspian – it features 20 of your favourite characters to play as. Our winner will get an 80GB iPod Classic while ten runners up will bag a copy of the game.

Who wrote the Chronicles of Narnia books?

- a) C. S. Lewis
- b) Enid Blyton
- c) Philip Pullman

Text TCON4, space and either A, B or C to 87474 (cost 50p) or go to: www.futurecomps.co.uk/tcon4



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for the main Canada trip compo.

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Meet Mr Sport



He battled Sony for years at Sega then Microsoft. Now head of EA Sports, Peter Moore tells us all about his secret love for PlayStation, what EA can learn from its competitors, and beating Pro Evo

Having spent years evangelising Sega and then Microsoft hardware, tell us what you always admired about PlayStation, and PS3 in particular?

I always loved, with PlayStation 2 and even the PlayStation, the industrial design. I have never made any bones about the fact that I thought that little blue light on the PS2 was a stroke of brilliance. Sony has always been a phenomenal hardware company. The industrial design has always been spectacular, I've always loved it.

And is that the same for PS3?

Yeah, though I don't think PS3 is quite the departure that PS2 was. You'd never seen anything like a PS2. Versus the Dreamcast, PlayStation, Gamecube, N64, all this stuff, all of a sudden you've got a sleek piece of consumer electronics.

The PS3 isn't as much of a departure, in terms of industrial design, as PS2 was at the time. It's still a good looking box, but you know, the PS2 was so radical with that little blue light, and the fact that the PlayStation logo would spin depending on which posture it was in.

Talking about PS3, the 2.41 update has launched with trophies. In terms of features, do you think PS3 is now finally where it perhaps should have been from the beginning? And are trophies something you think you'll be able to tap in to, particularly with the sports titles?

Whether it's Howard Stringer or Kaz [Hirai, CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment] or whoever, [Sony] would say 'there's a lot of things we should have done quicker'. And usually this relates to online and trophies – obviously the Achievement concept that we had built at Xbox became a very sticky application. And I'm delighted to see the progress that PS3 is making, particularly online, with the network and ultimately Home. But, yes, I think that even the strongest supporters of PlayStation will say 'boy, this is the stuff we should have done a lot sooner,' quite frankly.

Have trophies come in time for this year's sports titles?

That's a good question, and I don't know the answer to that. It certainly wouldn't be for

the titles we've already shipped or we're about to ship, but you know we're still a [little] way away from NHL and NBA in particular, and perhaps even FIFA, so I would have to defer to my dev teams on that.

Is it something you'd be interested in patching perhaps after the event if it doesn't happen in time?

Yeah, I think certainly if the consumer said, 'this is a really compelling feature, we love it.' And you're right, it's tailor made for sports. It all depends on the dev kits, in regards to what the requirement is for us to be able to do it, and I don't know enough about that yet.

You've spoken previously about exploring downloads as an alternative to discs. With EA sports titles offering yearly improvements rather than an entirely new game, do you think consumers would think they were getting value for money if it didn't come in a box?

People like things in boxes, you know – I buy my wife something from Tiffany's and I'm ►



interview

Peter Moore



not sure it's what *in* the box or whether it's the box itself. Packaging is textured, it's visceral, it's emotional – people like to get stuff in a box. Now, I think more and more we are all moving towards understanding that there is digital content and as long as the experience is the same, people are less worried. We have learned how to do that with music, where we don't need that shiny disk, and we are all trying to figure out, actually, like me, what to do with all these CDs now. I think ultimately the consumer will see the value of it all and will see savings out of it, because it's a far more efficient way to deliver content. So companies like ourselves can look at it as a way to deliver content more effectively – and more cost-effectively – for the consumer.

The annual iterations mean you have to add new features every year. Is there a danger that as a result your games will become too complicated for the average gamer?

We need to innovate every single year. I need to be able to deliver new innovations and, from a business point of view, I need to convince consumers why they should buy this year's version versus last year's version. I think that's pretty standard thinking. [But] let's take the examples of this year where a lot of the new elements will actually be *about* approachability and accessibility.

You've probably seen that we're talking about adaptive AI that will help you along. You are going to see a lot more of that. We just put out a press release on FIFA features [which include] a lot more approachability, and of course, the All-Play concept on the Wii, which finally brings built from the ground up gameplay to that platform, which as you know is very different from whatever you are looking for if you buy an Xbox or PS3 version. So, yeah, people expect a new game every year. We need to provide innovation but not necessarily innovation with complexity.

This year is the first that members of EA development teams have discussed feedback and upcoming titles on forums like operationsports.com. Why the sudden change?

You have to communicate nowadays in a completely different way, almost on a one-on-one basis, so the point is that you see more of the forum work. It's more about folks getting in and explaining what the game is about. I do a blog which I enjoy [and] that I think helps me. Sometimes it sparks a lot of controversy, obviously, but at least we are having a conversation. You accept when you do a blog that people have the benefit of anonymity and they can call you all of the names under the sun. But at least we are

having a different conversation now with consumers rather than just issuing a press release and then moving on to the next game. There's a whole different way that consumers expect to be spoken to by companies.

Is it something that you've been personally involved in promoting?

There are very few things which piss me off, but if we are not responsive or we don't get our blogs up... We've got to say fresh, we've got to stay topical, we've got to continue to give the information. It can't be once every six weeks we show you some screenshots or footage. We'd better be delivering something to you every few days to keep you coming back for more. And yeah, there are certain things that I don't do well, but communication is something that I do do well. I lead from the top and I enjoy talking to the community.

One game which is particularly good at community feedback is MLB 08 - The Show, which is considered the best sports game on PS3 by many critics.

“Stay tuned for rugby and cricket games – they're not benched.”

Do you look at other games? And what do you try to learn from them?

Well you always look at everybody else's games, particularly if it's a new genre. You know, 2K Sports does a great job in a lot of games, Sony does a great job in some of their sports games and Konami does a great job in their soccer games. We always look, and I think you are constantly influenced by what's going on in and around your genre within the industry. If you don't pay any attention to your competitors, if you're not aware of what's going on, and if you're not looking to see what people do well and what the community likes about it, then you are just going to stagnate.

On the subject of Take Two, and the proposed takeover by EA, have you considered what the implications would be for the sports titles on both sides of the deal?

Well, obviously we are still in negotiations, not only with Take Two, but also with the federal government, so there is not much that we can talk about, other than when you go in and you offer to pay \$2 billion for something, you know what's in there. There's a lot yet to be done, and we're a long way from making this

acquisition, but we're confident that the value we're offering to shareholders will prevail.

Last year's version of Pro Evo Soccer on PS3 drew comparatively negative reviews. What was the reaction internally at EA Sports? Was it Champagne all round, or is it good to have strong competitors?

We love competition, gamers love competition. You either compete with somebody or you compete with yourself. We've always had a great deal of respect for Pro Evo, but soccer's a unique segment of the genre where it's basically two companies. And it really is head-to-head.

I am very fortunate – I have a spectacular development team and we've made great strides in the last two or three years. I'm very proud of what we did. We took a hard decision before my time to get into the next-gen engine quicker, and if I understand the situation correctly Konami delayed that decision and I think have publicly said that they regret doing so.

Would you agree that NHL is currently the strongest of the EA Sports titles?

Oh, yeah, [it was] sports game of the year last year for a lot of people. When you look at it for how well it does in its segment, what its market share is, the quality level and its Metacritic ratings, it does very, very well. We're very proud of NHL.

When you see one title like that which is excelling in particular, is there a reason why that happens?

When we look at the NHL team, there are a lot of reasons. I mean you've got a team that's culturally connected – one of the senior guys there played in the NHL, and I could pretty much guarantee that 80% of that team swings a stick around somewhere, and play the game at one level or another. And they're Canadians, I mean they *bleed* hockey.

Is it true that all the various EA Sports development teams share technology amongst themselves more than they have in the past?

Yeah, I think that's a fair statement. We obviously had some work to do on the PS3 twelve months ago, and the teams all shared

how we were going to get our PlayStation 3 titles on a parity with the Xbox 360 and that's been achieved. You can't do that working in silos. We're fortunate that we're only in two locations, and in particular as you saw in Burnaby [at EA Canada], you've got a seamless group of people that, while they're on individual titles, are part of one big team.

How many of the design, innovation and new feature ideas are decided at a group level and how much is it down to the teams themselves? When we saw the new titles side by side in Vancouver there were a lot of features cropping up in all of them, like the adaptive AI...

My job – and Steve Chiang who's senior VP of development – [is that] we set the strategic template for what we want the game to deliver, and approachability and acceptability are key. We want to captivate the masses and we can't do that with games that are too hard. At the same time we have got to continue to capture the core consumer and that's why it's adaptive, not simply dumbed down. It figures out how good you are and if you're good enough it will probably leave you alone, but if you need help, as I'm sure I do on most of these games, it will come along and help.

You've mentioned Metacritic. How much do you rely on the site when making very real big money decisions internally at EA?

We believe Metacritic is a great way of judging the quality of the game. It's a *little* tougher in sports – I think it's very difficult for us with iterative titles because the reviewers now – no disrespect to them – are falling in love with titles that are two or three years in development, have teams upwards of 150-200, huge budgets and which are story driven and have rich characters in them. And we don't do any of that in sports. We're striving for authentic sports experiences that innovate every single year.

But, yeah, we want our Metacritic rating. When a title first ships, I'm always thinking, 'where are our reviews on this?' I'm very proud of some of the scores we get. It's really the only way you can judge the quality of your game, other than looking at it and saying 'boy, this feels like a much better game than last year'. You really want something that's a little bit more objective and that's what a Metacritic rating does for us.

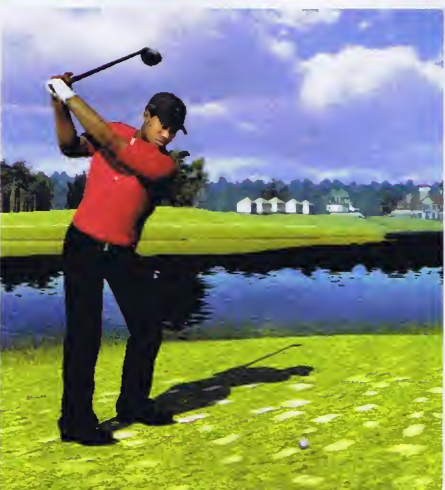
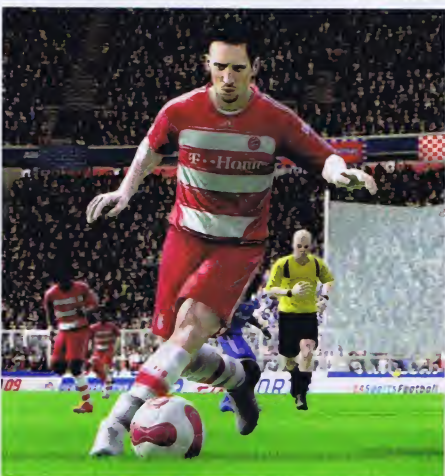
And in your experience is the financial success of the game tied very closely to the Metacritic score?

It depends. I think in some instances at the high end, when you see what the Mass



Who is... Peter Moore

Born in Liverpool in 1955, Moore originally moved to California in the early '80s to teach 'soccer', but later got a job with French sportswear firm Patrick, eventually moving on to Reebok. He joined Sega of America in '99, overseeing the launch of Dreamcast (which actually did quite well in the States), before Microsoft came calling in 2003. Moore was corporate vice president of the Interactive Entertainment Business through the launch of Xbox 360 and stuck with the corporation until last year, when EA tempted him back to Cali as president of EA Sports.



interview

Peter Moore

Effects and the Bioshocks and the Grand Theft Autos get, yeah. But those were going to be huge games anyway, I think it simply validates consumers going out to buy them. Maybe Bioshock would be separate from those, because that was brand new IP and came out of the blue, and was very different to what you were expecting, but boy it reviewed very well. I think it's like anything else – this weekend I saw the first review of Hancock and it just got panned, and I thought 'maybe I'm not going to see that one'. I was watching TV this morning and it really got a bad review. Does that influence me? I think it probably does in some way, and I think when our game consumers look at Metacritic ratings they've got to make a choice, you know, they've got five games and they can't figure out what to buy this Saturday morning – we know our gamers go online and look at review scores.

What about the sports franchises we haven't seen so far on PS3, the cricket and rugby titles? Are these series' permanently benched? Have you had any talks with the IPL (Indian Premier League) or anything like that?

Not necessarily with the IPL. You know, cricket – I'm fond of saying, if you think India is going to be important five years from now you'd better be in cricket. But, yeah, not necessarily with the IPL. I'm watching the Twenty20 format very closely – as closely as I can from San Francisco anyway – and figuring out what that means from a game mechanic point of view. Stay tuned on rugby and cricket – no, they're not benched. We've proudly done both of those sports at one level or another on platforms over the past few years but it's vital we just need to get a bit more of a rhythm on that.

Recently, you've talked on your blog about piracy and the damage it can do. On a related note, how involved was EA in the clampdown on the trade of user-made PES kits which were infringing your licences? Is that something which you want to continue policing?

It's tough for me to comment because I don't know all the details, but if I remember rightly, or as it was explained to me, the Premier League stepped in on behalf of the clubs, rather than us doing something.

What's the most inaccurate rumour you have ever read about yourself?

That when I left Microsoft, I didn't leave of my own volition. That continues not to go away. I resigned because I wanted to go back to the Bay Area. I mean the job that I got I love, but people still believe that I was basically fired.



feature

Mirror's Edge

PS
062

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

feature
Mirror's Edge



The future has arrived. And it's calling itself Mirror's Edge



**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
REPORT**
PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

Speed freak

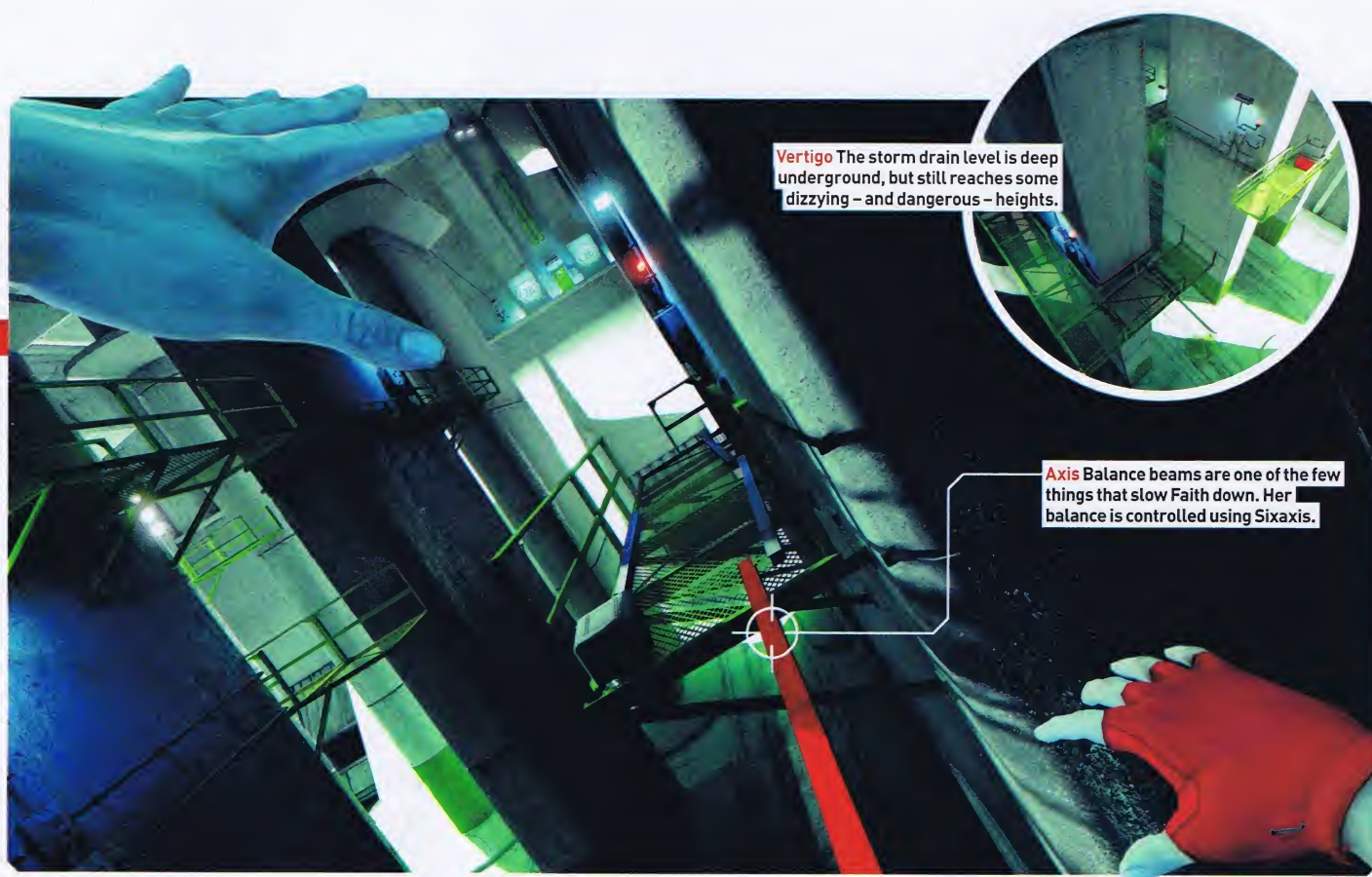
We race lead lady Faith through two levels of parkour action during our exclusive hands-on



PS
064

A stylized, isometric map of a city, likely London, rendered in shades of blue and white. A prominent red path winds through the city blocks, indicating the route taken by Faith in the game. A white crosshair is positioned over a specific point on this red path.

Red route On the stylishly animated map, the red areas show the route each level takes through the city.



Yes, it is beautiful. Every screenshot of its crisp, sanitised urban setting drives home just how clean and iconic this game's design is. And yes, courier of the future and rebellious hero Faith is astonishingly graceful, gliding over the stainless metropolis like a river over rocks (a river with *really* pretty hair). But Mirror's Edge isn't just about style, it's about philosophy.

Specifically, it's about the philosophy of movement. While the game's first-person

opening rooftop chase made famous by the game's believe-it-or-not trailer, and a second in a huge underground storm drain with a vertical network of pillars and ladders, and in both cases the aim is the same: to reach the finish as quickly as possible. Momentum is everything – staying in motion, negotiating obstacles without dropping speed, cutting corners, stringing moves together. As you run, you're constantly looking around using the game's super-wide 90° field of vision,

And it's this same robustness that will lead to the game's replayability. Although Faith's 'runner vision' paints red the most basic route through each level, there are several off-track courses available to the imaginative player. This might be simple, like wall-jumping up the *inside* of a stairwell rather than plodding up flights individually, or more complex, like the storm drain's intricate playground of swing-jumps and platform hops that form a daunting alternative route to the surface. After the ▶

"It isn't just about style, it's about philosophy."

action has obviously been heavily influenced by the scuffling acrobatics of urban sport parkour, Mirror's Edge has also adopted the ideals of the French discipline. David Belle, who's worth listening to because he founded parkour in the early '90s and is *incredibly* good at jumping, sums it up like this: "The movement is simple. I don't do anything special, because I want to get to the other side. What I'm interested in is the utilitarian thing of getting to the other end."

And that sums up Mirror's Edge in a sentence – it's about getting to the other end. I've played through two complete levels, the

gaining a feel for your surroundings, your limbs occasionally edging into the frame – a hand planted for a fence-vault, a foot placed before a jump. You look at the floor more than anything, to check your footing, to time jumps and slides; it gives you an incredible sense of being grounded in the world.

This is crucial when you screw up – and you *will* screw up – because it always feels like it's your fault. It sounds like a minor thing, but when you find yourself flailing short of a simple wall-to-wall jump for the third or fourth time you need to be sure that you're the one failing, rather than the mechanic itself.





Who is Faith?

Our heroine is a super-agile courier in a near-future society where electronic communications are heavily monitored. While running secret messages over the rooftops she finds out that her sister is in danger. When Faith tries to help, she uncovers a sinister conspiracy at the heart of the city.

the pipes and platforms of the storm drain level, for instance, Faith encounters a squad of police snipers. Two of them take pot shots from the opposite side of the underground complex, while another two emerge on the walkway leading to the exit, trapping Faith in the middle. One unique effect of the game is that you find yourself planning moves and plotting courses, taking in your surroundings and envisioning a route through them. This is how the next bit played out in my head: leap the gap from the dizzyingly high platform to the ledge, land lightly, and slide towards the cop. Stand and disarm my enemy in one smooth motion, popping two lethal rounds into his colleague, before turning sharply – still zoomed in through the gun's sights – to take out the distant sharpshooters.

What actually happens is that I mistime that first jump and send Faith plummeting to the bone-cracking concrete floor. Luckily, checkpoints are frequent and designed to be stress-free, so within seconds I'm back at the top; this time the jump goes fine. I take a few clumsy blows to the face before flooring the first gunman and stealing his piece. Faith is slowed by the weapon, but the aiming is smooth and feedback from firing – I discover as I spray lead liberally at the second officer – is solid and physical. In short, it feels like you'd expect any specialist shooter to feel.

Or it does for a few seconds, until the sense of urgency returns. So Faith ditched the gun – this is why Faith always ditched the gun – and keeps running. Speed is everything. With all the other possibilities on offer, there are more important things to do than shoot guns. Mirror's Edge is an acrobatic leap forward – and with PS3 being the development team's lead platform, you'll want to keep a sharp eye out to see how it lands.

"You find yourself planning moves and plotting courses"

initial rush of finishing, the draw will be, how can I get better? And, how can I be faster?

With this philosophy in place, everything is just an obstacle to your speed and movement: vents, stairs, gaps, slopes – even people. Yes, it's first-person and sometimes you have a gun, but Mirror's Edge does combat in a totally different way to other FPSs. You can complete it without notching a single kill, and when you do engage enemies the emphasis is on short, sharp clashes. Faith has a tidy martial arts style, with her arms and legs tucked tight to her body, snapping out to land punches and snatch weapons from foes.

Controlling these snatches is kept simple – **R1** for a melee attack, a timed press of **A** to

disarm the opponent when their gun flashes red, and **R1** again to fire the weapon – though you won't be holding on to it for long. Faith can't pick up ammo so once the clip's empty, the weapon is useless. More importantly, her movement's restricted by the added weight, meaning she'll never carry a gun for more than a few seconds – she just tosses them away and keeps on running.

Lightning strike

The effect is breathless and frantic, and the focus is always on getting *past* the fights rather than the fights themselves. But that doesn't mean the shooting mechanic is in any way substandard. Once she's clambered up

Disarming

Watch for the red flash

Faith can take out enemies using hand-to-hand combat, but if she wants to use a gun she needs to disarm an opponent. The mechanism is simple: during a fist fight, enemies will occasionally try to strike you with their weapon. When they do, the weapon flashes red, for just a moment. Press **A** at the right time and the gun's yours – until it runs dry of ammo or you need to make a big jump.



6

Next! Then she's on the surface and, once she's dealt with another squad of cops, she's off and running again.



5

Leap! One last, long jump from the ascending planks will carry Faith to the top ledge of the silo.

4

Balance! Faith jumps onto this stack of girders, then leaps again to another stack that's being winched up.

3

Climb! Once inside she uses the pipes, platforms and ladders to circle up around the inside of the tower.

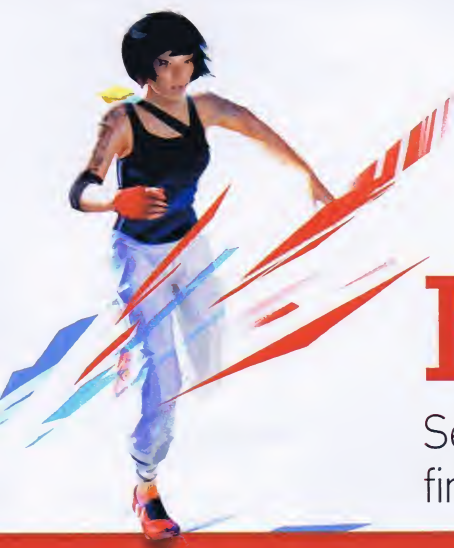
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Grab! The snipers are the last thing standing between Faith and the silo leading to the surface – and safety.

Splash! Once past them, Faith slides down a sluice, guiding herself to land on the ledge below.





Interview

Senior producer Owen O'Brien on influences, first-person camera trickery and lots of guns



OPM What have you worked on previously, and how did it impact the conception of *Mirror's Edge*?

Owen O'Brien I've been at EA for about 12 years. I came over to Dice just at the crossover period when EA was about to purchase them. I was brought onboard because Dice wanted to create a new IP, they wanted to do something that wasn't *Battlefield*. So we tried a number of things. We hit upon the idea of first-person movement, because that was something that hadn't really been done well before. We knew we wanted to have an athletic character, and I was pushing for a female character. So we had the character and the mechanic, and then we sat down with Rhianna Pratchett to work out the storyline of the runner and the city. I like the idea – I took it from *Serenity* and *Firefly*, the Joss Whedon thing – that you can't force other people to live by your rules, even if your rules are better. And it's the second part of that sentence that's the important thing – a lot of games are about totalitarian states and dictatorships, but in our game, certainly at the start, it's not that cut and dry. People are happy, it's just they're very controlled. The only thing that's wrong with the city is that people who don't agree have been pushed to the side, ostracised and even criminalised. And then things start to change, they're taken one step further and that's when the game starts.

OPM So if it's not that cut and dry, what's the hook for people at the start of the game? Why do they want to be Faith?

OB Well, what happens is her sister is put under threat, and in an effort to protect her sister she realises

there's something more sinister going on in the city than it first appears. A lot of people have reacted to the 2D trailer and said, 'Oh, is it just about saving your sister?' And the answer is, it's only about saving your sister in the same way that *Die Hard* was just about John McClane saving his wife, or *Aliens* was just about Ripley saving Newt. She's the catalyst, but there's a bigger conspiracy than that.

OPM Why did you employ the different style for the game's 2D cut-scenes? They look a little like *Killer 7*. What were the influences behind this aesthetic?

OB We're telling the story of *Mirror's Edge* in a number of different ways. One is traditional mo-cap for in-game cut-scenes, as you would see in *Bad Company*. The other, in-between levels, is the 2D style. The idea is that they should follow the same overall art direction as the rest of the game, so it's still about the vibrant colours and they're not dirty, or grimy, or post-apocalyptic. From that point of view they're representing the same world. I think a lot of developers spend a lot of money on mo-cap cut-scenes which people then skip through, so I wanted to try something different, and I wanted to give the player a different sort of reward at the end of each level. I've had comments that it looks like *Flashback*, going back to that sort of style. I like the style, I think it's interesting – the mo-cap cut-scenes are all still from the first-person, so once you go into the game you never leave the first-person point of view. This is great for immersion, but can possibly become restrictive for storytelling after a while. With any game you only get a finite amount of time and resources, and I wanted

to spend the resources on the game, on the player control and player movements. I wanted my animators working on stuff the player would feel rather than see.

OPM What other influences were there? People have mentioned *Tomb Raider* and *Prince Of Persia*, but what about things that aren't games?

OB From the parkour side of things I obviously liked games like *Prince Of Persia*, but also movies like *District 13*, and the chase scene in *Casino Royale*, which came along late into development but became quite a good mantra for us – it was like, 'that's it, that's the game, you get to play that.' And then I think there's other things in there too – I know people see influences of *Aeon Flux*, *The Island* and those sorts of things, but those tend to be more dystopian future societies rather than something more contemporary. From the city point of view, some of the inspiration came from – and it's very easy to take this reference incorrectly – but it's *Blade Runner*, in the sense of *East meets West*. I saw an interview with Ridley Scott where he was saying that he was projecting a city forward – New York meets Tokyo in the future – but what he got wrong was that New York got a lot cleaner, and if he was doing it again he'd make the city cleaner and more appealing, but still sinister and soulless for that. And I think that's one of the things we're trying to get across as well.

OPM With the amount of three-dimensional movement going on, the controls must have been incredibly difficult to perfect?

OB It took a lot. Once we got past the player's FPS hard wiring, people got the controls

The colour of magic

Rhianna Pratchett is the daughter of enormously successful Discworld author Terry Pratchett. Described as a 'scriptwriter, story designer and general narrative paramedic' on her official website (rhiannapatchett.com), Pratchett previously worked on *Heavenly Sword* – another game with a strong female lead – as well as *Overlord: Raising Hell* and *Viking: Battle For Asgard*, before being hired by EA to develop the story for *Mirror's Edge*.



Gorram shiny

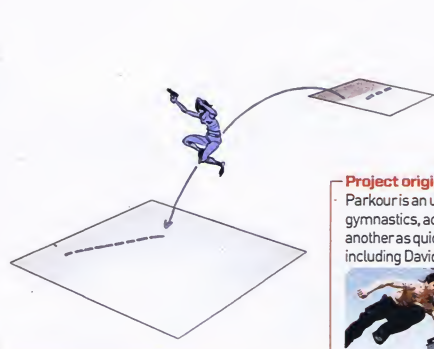
Joss Whedon's sci-fi series *Firefly* – and the big-screen follow-up *Serenity* – features a rebellious, Han Solo-style smuggler called Malcolm Reynolds who's at odds with the civil but sinister Alliance government. The series also features Summer Glau as the extraordinarily athletic River Tam, a clear influence on Faith.



Remember when?

Flashback was a multiplatform sci-fi adventure released in 1992 by Delphine software, and designed by Paul Cuisset. Regarded as a classic, the game was set in a cyberpunk version of 2142 and featured a government agent, Conrad B Hart, trying to recover his memory and save the world from an alien invasion conspiracy. Like the original *Prince Of Persia*, *Flashback* used rotoscoped motion capture animation to give its character movements an unusual fluidity and grace. Conrad was able to run, jump, climb and hang from objects – an early forerunner of movement based titles like *Mirror's Edge*. According to a recent IGN interview, Cuisset is now working on a survival horror title for PS3.





Project origins

Parkour is an urban sport with many similarities to free-running, combining gymnastics, acrobatics and speed with the aim of getting from one place to another as quickly as possible. It was founded in France by a circle of friends including David Belle and Sébastien Foucan, who would both go on to appear in films which incorporated parkour in their stuntwork – Belle as the star of the 2004 French film *District 13* (focusing on a dystopian future not unlike that in *Mirror's Edge*), and Foucan in the opening chase sequence of Daniel Craig's *Bond* debut, *Casino Royale*.



pretty quickly – up is up, down is down. We spent a lot of time working on stuff that people didn't even notice, like the camera movement, the field of view, the depth of field. Making it look that easy is hard, otherwise people would have done it before. The one thing with first-person movement was that there wasn't one big fundamental problem, there were lots of really small ones. I can see why people before have gone, 'f*** it, let's just put the gun back.' It is a pain in the ass. Just things like needing the cursor to prevent motion sickness. Our camera mimics the eye, not the head.

OPM What does that mean?

OB Well that's maybe a simplistic way of thinking about it, but imagine sticking a camera onto your forehead and then moving your head around; you can move your head quite a lot, but your eyes could be focused on the same thing. People tend to stay looking at things even though their head's moving, so I could be looking you in the eye but moving my head, I could be shaking my head or nodding, doing lots of things.

OPM The game provides the player with a wider field of vision – it gives you 90° while most first-person games give you 45-50°. Can you talk about that?

OB Changing the field of vision was mostly to give the player a greater sense of perspective, to be able to see more of the world and be able to judge things more quickly. A lot of first-person games are set in confined corridors or space stations or whatever, and they want that claustrophobic feel. By widening out the field of view you get more perspective. But there are problems that come with that. You

get weird distortions – some things look really small, and then up close they look really big. And when you extend your arm straight out in front of you, if you have a really wide field of view, it'll get really distorted as well. So it brought challenges for us to work with, and it influenced the combat style that we then used for Faith. We wanted a style where she kept her arms and legs close to her, rather than, like, Tae Kwon Do with big, long kicks. Extending the limbs to their full extent is not a good idea in a 90° field of view.

OPM Did you have to perform any special camera tricks to make this unusual effect work for the player during the game? There must have been a concern that it would be disorientating in practice?

OB Our rig is unique. If you were to look at our rig it doesn't look like a human body. The head is detached from the body, the arms are actually out here. It's not as simple as taking a third-person setup and sticking a camera in it. It's very distorted. The weirdest thing is, if you are doing these jumps and things in real life you actually don't see very much – you would never actually see your arms and your legs. So we're actually faking a lot of stuff. When you do a vault, your legs come up much higher than they would in real life. If you could see our camera moving along then the legs would move up and then come down again. But it feels right in first-person.

OPM And you use separate character models when you see Faith in mirrors – does that make multiplayer difficult, as far as having two people existing in the same game space?

OB It was challenging, certainly, but we're not talking about the online side of the game yet.

Firepower

The final game will feature around 15 different weapons. Confirmed so far from their appearance in various trailers are: 1 The FN Scar, a battle rifle used by real-life SOCOM teams. 2 The Benelli M3 Super 90, a pump action shotgun similar to the SPAS 12 familiar from *Call Of Duty 4*. 3 The Beretta 92, the US military's standard firearm from *Call Of Duty 4*. And below the Glock 18, favoured by Austria's EKO Cobra unit.



OPM But you do have two people in the same space at some points then?

OB Yes, you will see a third-person mesh.

OPM As a game which is almost moving beyond the shooting mechanic, do you have many guns in there?

OB Yeah, there are a lot of guns in the game. At one stage we had as many guns in our game as they do in *Bad Company*. I think we've slimmed it down a bit now, but **the guns are as much as a part of the gameplay as you, the player, want them to be.** If you want to take the risk/reward of tackling people and taking their weapons off them then that's the strategy you take. You use guns more that way, but you need to be quite skilled with the moves to disarm people that often.

OPM And how much time did you spend getting that part of the game right?

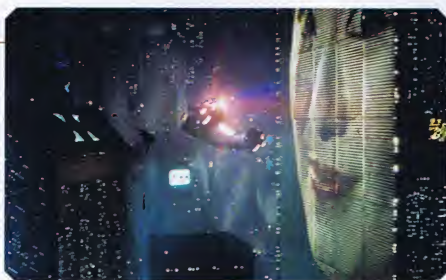
OB Even if it's a temporary power-up it still needs to feel good and powerful. It's not the focus of our game, but it's an important feature, so we certainly spent as much time on it as it deserved.

OPM Have you thought about Trophy support yet? Is it just a matter of taking the Xbox 360 achievements and porting them over?

OB That's what we're looking into at the moment. That would be plan A, and we'll see if that works, and if it doesn't, we'll try something else.

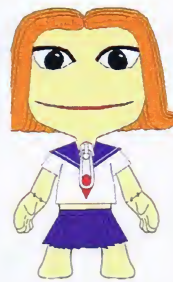
OPM Do you have downloadable content in the works? New areas of the city or new gameplay modes?

OB We have got DLC plans, but we're not talking about those until later.

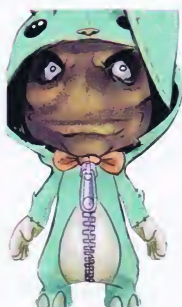


feature

Little Big Planet



We ♥ Little





Big Planet

PS4
071

Website dontpaniconline.com recently ran a competition to design a Little Big Planet sackboy. From Bowie to Batman, these are our faves



feature

E3 2008



PLAYSTATION.3



Access

Get ready to go behind the scenes at the year's most important games event

The anticipation factor

- ★★★★★ Pre-order now
- ★★★★★ Start saving
- ★★★★ Watch this space
- ★★★ Ignore the hype
- ★ Hope it's canned

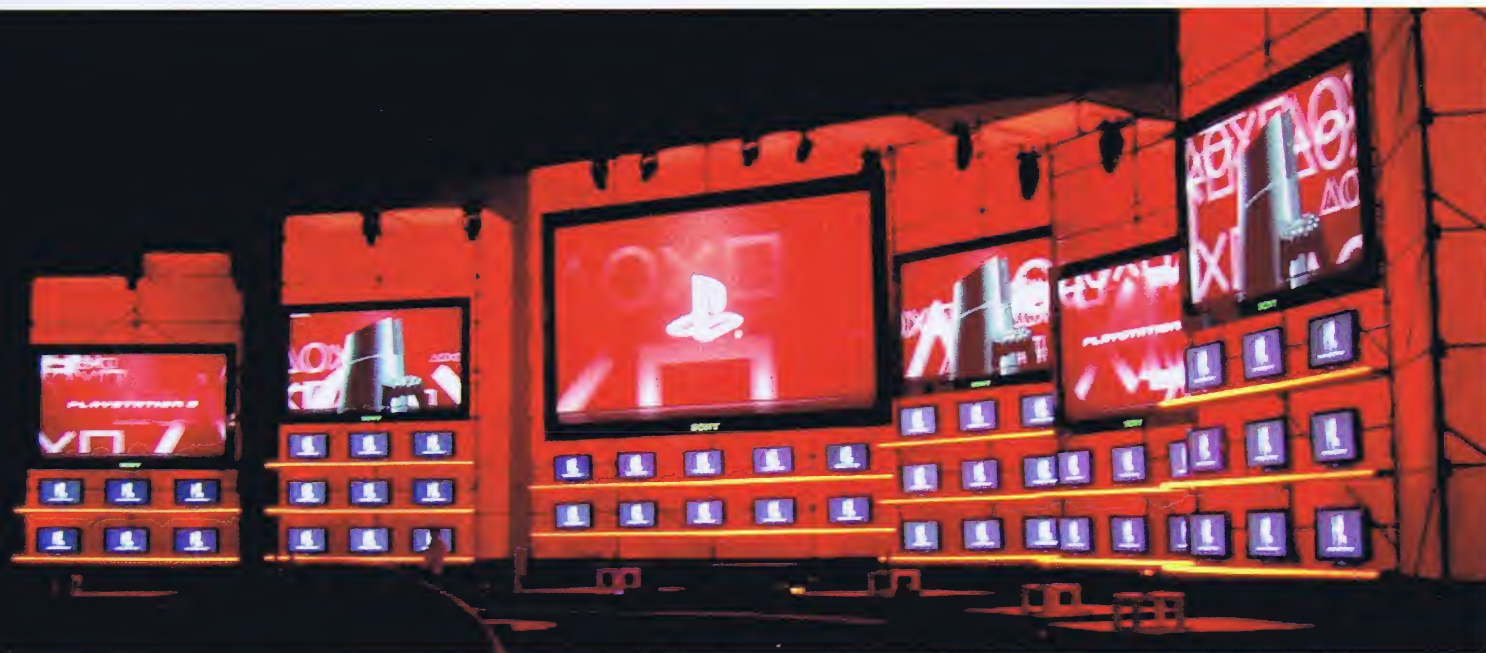
all areas

Each year the games industry locks away its Gundam figurines and heads to Los Angeles for the E3 convention. It's a showcase for all the latest ideas and innovations, and a chance to go hands-on with the games we'll be buying this Christmas and beyond. But where it was once a glitzy, bazillion dollar behemoth that made the Motor Show look

liked a used car lot, the event is now a size zero shadow of its former self. Despite that, it remains a vital date in the calendar for rival software makers to compare line-ups, each hoping to walk away from the virtual bathroom with the satisfaction of knowing theirs is the biggest. So, want to see the future of PS3? Join OPM as we sort the monster hits from the 'do not wants'.

Sony brings the power

New games, old favourites and a strong PSN line-up win the crowd



80GB PS3

PS3 is in for another memory overhaul. During Sony's glittering press conference SCEA chief Jack Tretton introduced an 80GB model, due to hit on 27 August for £299 and be the "mainstay of the hardware line-up". It's the same 40GB machine with a new hard drive, perhaps in readiness for the films and TV download service. The 40GB, which replaced the old 60GB PS3, will be phased out. So long, friend. ★★★★★ 27 August 2008



▲ Sony's conference stage stamps down its carbon footprint.

MOTORSTORM PACIFIC RIFT

In short: More of the same. This is essentially the first game on a palm-covered island with a few enhancements – like the ability to barge rivals using **L1** and **R1** (good, but we didn't get to try bike vs monster truck), and the way that going through water cools your boost, while lava overheats it. Speaking of which, water depth is variant – big trucks plough through deep areas, but bikes sink. Cool. ★★★★★ October 2008



LITTLE BIG PLANET

You know it's cute, you know you can make stuff, but now you can kick ass too. As well as news that there's 60 creation tutorials, trophies and Stephen Fry providing voiceovers – the big surprise appears in the new construction site level. After Sackboy makes it through a mix of platforms and see-saws he faces a massive end of level boss and two henchmen. The key to victory is to move a platform to bounce the fiery logs they shoot, back at them. The most exciting bit? You'll have the tools to make your own bosses when the game ships. ★★★★★ October 2008





075

INFAMOUS

Imagine waking up with no memory and Jedi-like powers. You can throw cars with your mind, fire electrical bolts and tear through the city like Altair flung from a catapult. Would you be good or bad? That's the poser behind this open-world superhero adventure. The best thing we've seen so far is the game's hero using his abilities to catch a speeding train *on foot* - leaping from building to building - before blasting a car off the tracks to prevent a crash. Of course, that's the 'good' option. Imagine the havoc you could wreak if you were feeling a little more antisocial...

★★★★ TBC 2009

ALSO Incoming PSN treats include **Flower** where you control petals floating on the wind (it's from the Flow guys so should be better than it sounds) and **Crash Commando** - a side-scrolling multiplayer blaster. Hardcore PSN shoot-'em-up Super Stardust HD is also swooping over onto PSP, courtesy of **Super Stardust Portable**.





GOD OF WAR III

Our first glimpse of Kratos on PS3 (longer beard, still tetchy). A new teaser reveals the god-slayer atop a mountain, surveying a ruined world beneath him. A solemnly voice intones: "In the end he will suffer. In the end we will triumph. In the end..." before Kratos interrupts, snarling, "There will be only chaos!"

★★★★★ TBC 2009



NEW

RESISTANCE RETRIBUTION

This third-person action adventure is set weeks after the events of the first Resistance game. Playing as Brit James Grayson, your job is to clear the Chimera out of Europe. Huge detailed worlds, a generous checkpoint system, plus eight-player ad-hoc complete an intriguing Resistance plot twist.

★★★★ Spring 2009

NEW



GRAN TURISMO TV

Sony has been showing elements of its GT-TV channel since last November, but E3 saw lots of new details emerging. The service will be available through the PlayStation Network via GT Prologue and features pay-per-view and free content including well-known related shows like Top Gear as well as footage of global motorsport events such as Japan's Super GT and the D1 Drift Grand Prix. We'll also get exclusive news and documentaries including a visit to the Ferrari factory with GT producer Kazunori Yamauchi.

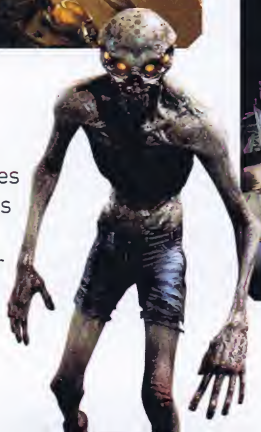
★★★★ August 2009



RESISTANCE 2

This enormous Leviathan boss chases ant-like troops and swats choppers out of the sky. Returning soldier Nathan Hale takes on the beast mano-a-mano, firing rockets down its gullet and climbing cranes to reach rooftops, before being grabbed in its claws and thrown across half the city. Add in eight-player co-op, 60-player competitive combat and astonishing visuals and you've got the machine gun-toting mother of all comebacks.

★★★★★ November 2008





KILLZONE 2

There's no doubt that Killzone 2 is looking hella pretty. Incredibly, the multiplayer is just as eye-massagingly beautiful, with the game's HD environments and fancy special effects losing none of their oomph online. Locations so far include a Helghan courtyard, housing slums, derelict warehouses and trench-filled battlefields. Class wise, as well as the standard Grunt (machine gun, big cojones), we've seen an explosive-touting Heavy with a grenade launcher and a Scout with a silenced sniper rifle and stealth camo. ★★★★★ February 2009



ALSO Final revelations. Sony has a deal with Google to enable instant video uploads from your PS3 hard drive to **YouTube**. Also look out for an upcoming Platinum range of budget PS3 hits starting out with ten early classics. At the time of going to press these include **Heavenly Sword** **Motorstorm** **Ratchet & Clank: TOD** **Uncharted: Drake's Fortune** **Virtua Tennis** and **Assassin's Creed** for around 20 notes each.



PAIN AMUSEMENT PARK

The latest level in this catapult-'em-up is full of moving objects. With six new modes and an online multiplayer, you fire your screaming man into tea cup rides, log flumes and roller coasters, creating mayhem as you go. ★★★★★ Autumn 2008



RAG DOLL KUNG FU FISTS OF PLASTIC

Mix Virtua Fighter and puppets and you get this. **1** and **2** give you control over your arms to pull different poses to build up 'chi' for special moves. Then there's multiplayer where you play games like capture the fish. Riiight. ★★★★★ TBC 2009



FAT PRINCESS

Obesity-based strategy RPG. (Woot!) As one of two teams you have to rescue your princess from the enemy fort while holding their gal in your own castle. Like capture the flag. With a chunky aristocrat. And the ten pudding themed maps sound delicious. Can't wait. ★★★★★ TBC 2009

Activision sequel frenzy

New instalments and familiar franchises support a few new faces

CALL OF DUTY WORLD AT WAR

He'll never replace Captain Price (all solemnly salute), but he does have the appropriate gravel-throated credentials so we're pretty excited that Kiefer Sutherland is on voice duties for World Of War. Otherwise, the big news is that, WW2 sadness now behind us, the game's looking pretty sharp, and sounding *really* loud – co-op campaign footage (online, not splitscreen) features rounds popping in the Japanese jungles like the sound of God's own hammers.

★★★★ November 2008

❑ COD5 reveals its newest set-piece: a stunning naval air raid.



SINGULARITY

If Activision was a fashion house, then 'in' this season would be 'science' and 'bullets'. Singularity is just a teaser trailer right now, but consider us teased. A sad Russian voiceover ('I told them it was unsafe'), crumbling Soviet-era industrial landscapes (spot the hammer and sickle on the rusty dock side), shooting (obviously), and ghostly apparitions all feature. Plus, crackling energy storms and environments switching between past and present suggest time travel will play a big part. ★★★ TBC 2009

NEW

❑ Bond's got Craig and the COD4 engine, but it's no Goldeneye.



WOLFENSTEIN

Not enough games do a really good Nazi these days, but, what with having been around forever, Wolfenstein has them down perfectly. The new footage showcases grand Nuremberg-style banners, naughty occult research and fizzling blue lightning flash effects. What's been revealed of the plot so far is basically the same as ever – Hitler's goose-stepping occult researchers have opened up a portal to all kinds of freaky shizzle, leading to the kind of futuristic hella-stormtrooper you can see there on the right – but it's looking prettier than ever.

★★★★ TBC 2009

NEW



QUANTUM OF SOLACE

The good news is that Daniel Craig has made Bond badass again and the game's tech is undeniably strong (it's the Call Of Duty 4 engine, people). But there hasn't been a truly brilliant 007 tie-in for years, and there's not much in Quantum's hybrid camera – switching from third to first-person depending on whether you're straight up shooting or using cover – to make us think that's going to change any time soon. Decent, obviously, it just looks a bit... flat.

★★★★ October 2008

ALSO Stacks of new info has been announced for **Guitar Hero World Tour** including that old GH guitars will work and the drum kit will be quieter/sturdier than Rock Band's, and can be configured in dozens of ways. **Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows**, meanwhile, will feature both air combat sequences and quick-time events for boss battles, and **Fracture** will feature Washington DC as one of its terraformable environments.



Square Enix is elusive

RPG slate looks delicious, but low on details

FINAL FANTASY XIII

The father of Final Fantasy, Hironobu Sakaguchi, was once asked how much the game could be changed and still be Final Fantasy. He replied, "As long as we've got text bubbles with blue backgrounds, we'll be alright." Well, in FFXIII they're gone for the first time. It's also the first time the game will have a lead female character – she's called Lightning, although it's apparently not her real name – while the combat builds on XII's MMO-style battle system with no separate screen for the fighting itself. Apparently the art side is 70-80% complete, but there's no time limit on development... ★★★★★ TBC 2009



There a retro feel to The Last Remnant's battle system.



THE LAST REMNANT

Remnants are magical artefacts causing wars in a world populated by super-fringed swordsmen and exotic creatures – friendly toad men, giant FFXII Bangaa-style beasts. But there are differences to the usual Squenix schtick – random encounters are out, and the battles, which involve up to 70 enemies at once, also feature quick-time events. Which means that, like all the women we've ever fallen in love with, it's both pretty and worryingly complex. ★★★★★ TBC 2009

STAR OCEAN: FIRST DEPARTURE

A remake of the original SNES RPG – which was never released outside of Japan – only with 3D graphics, fully voiced cut-scenes and, if the trailer's anything to go by, *really* catchy music. The plot, which involves some kind of time-hopping business, is set in a future in which mankind has left Earth, with a bright cast of adventurers journeying through space. Basically, you can consider this the sci-fi yin to Final Fantasy's more magical yang. It's out in Japan right now and – hopefully – over here before Christmas. ★★★★★ October 2008



Ubisoft dresses for combat

Action-heavy line-up shows stacks of ambition (not you, Brothers In Arms)



I AM ALIVE

NEW

The hook goes like this: Chicago's been devastated by an unknown disaster. Your job is to survive the aftermath. The trailer for this foreboding adventure suggests gameplay built around environmental puzzles, rather than guns and gadgets. We can't wait.

★★★★★ Spring 2009



SHAUN WHITE SNOWBOARDING

Built with the Assassin's Creed engine, Ubi's snow star is as picturesque as the sun-dappled slopes of Mont Blanc. The E3 demo revealed a vast open-world where gamers can hike to their own spots and carve new roots through the white stuff. There are also half-pipe freestyle sections, complete with big air stunts. In the background, Shaun mentors you through the game, like Obi Wan Kenobi in a ski jacket. The social element is most interesting, you'll be able to meet your mates online to tackle the slopes together – or just start snowball fights. ★★★ Winter 2008



PRINCE OF PERSIA

How do you make the all-action prince cooler? Give him a pretty girl to hang out with. E3 was a chance to show what Erika can do: a PA, groupie and bodyguard all in one, she stops you getting lost, saves you when you're hurt and fights alongside you. She'll match the Prince jump for jump and move for move. Other dainty sidekicks should take note. Yes you, Yorda. ★★★★★ Spring 2009



FAR CRY 2

E3 showed that Ubi's open world shooter is a visual assault of exploding villages, shoot-outs and car chases, but it's not all good news. The AI seems all over the place - enemies aren't half as smart as the developer claims - and navigating using nothing other than a small compass and three scalable maps just got us lost. Lots. ★★☆☆ Autumn 2008



▲ Superb explosion effects meet dense open-world locations.

TOM CLANCY'S HAWX

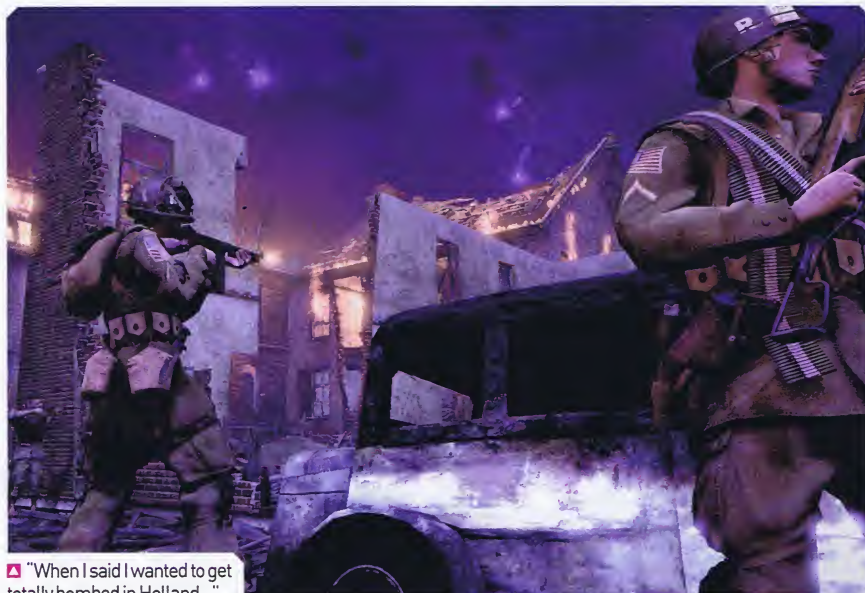
Aerial combat is perfect multiplayer territory, and Hawx has revealed death matches and four player co-op missions. Battling private military companies in the skies of Rio de Janeiro with F-22 Raptors, Typhoons, and Su-46s, players can call for support and act as wingmen to their mates. It's more of a rapid fire shooter in the sky than a technical flight sim, so a few minutes in the cockpit and you'll be pulling aerial acrobatics and taking out enemy planes. I've got tone, repeat, have tone! ★★☆☆ Spring 2009



TOM CLANCY'S ENDWAR

Guiding armies into battle using only voice commands? Can it work on PS3? Affirmative. The E3 demo revealed a mass battle in the heart of Paris as troops and tanks advance. Shout stuff like "Unit three attack tango four!" and choppers zoom in. Lovely. We're promised heavily upgradeable units, 40 real-world maps and persistent online campaigns.

★★★★ Winter 2008

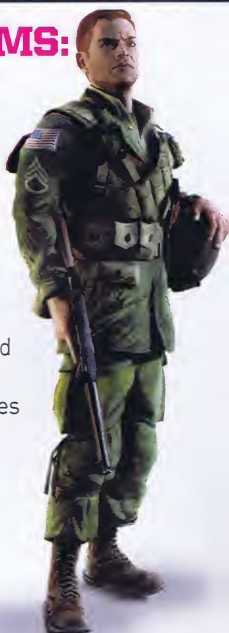


▲ "When I said I wanted to get totally bombed in Holland..."

BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

The scrupulously authentic squad-based shooter - set in and around WW2's disastrous Market Garden campaign - made a minor appearance at E3. Gearbox chief Randy Pitchford demoed a mission showing how to use flanking and suppressing fire during a raid on an occupied Dutch village. Very tense and tactical, but it seems you can choose just how much you use team strategies - want to go off alone? Sure, fine, see ya later. Want to direct en masse squad attacks? Go for it. Visuals look serviceable rather than amazing and it feels a little out of step with where military shooters are going.

★★ August 2008



EA = war and horror

Sport takes a back seat to shooting, sword thrusting and sci-fi nightmares



❑ No. No, we mustn't. It's... no. Oh, go on then. "Hey, you guys!"

RAGE

From Doom-creator, id, comes this dusty post-apocalypse adventure. No plot clues in the latest footage, which is basically a guns and dune buggies romp on a devastated, wasted Earth. Although it *does* show how the new id Tech 5 engine's impressive facial animations make for some excellently detailed irradiated maniacs. The blasted environments are gorgeously detailed, too.

★★★★★ TBC 2009

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: CONQUEST

We get the draw – the Star Wars Battlefront team turn their big battlefield know-how to Tolkien's fantasy opus – and we like that you can play as the bad guys as well as the Fellowship. Who wouldn't rather crack heads as the Balrog or Sauron himself instead of the limp-wristed Legolas? But we're just not that excited because it looks a little too close to Dynasty Warriors dressing up for a Middle Earth convention. ★★ November 2008



DEAD SPACE

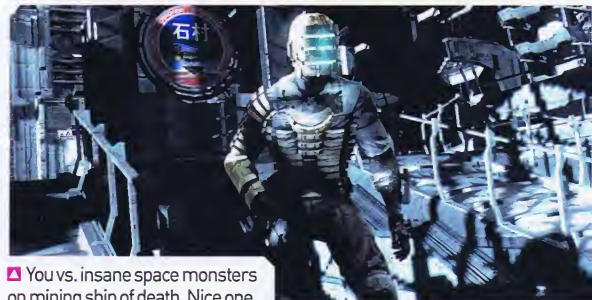
With the exception of Mirror's Edge (see our exclusive hands on feature on page 62), zero-g survival horror Dead Space is the most exciting thing coming from EA. It's super-pretty in a frozen dead universe way, and looks very much like Resi 4 by way of Aliens/The Thing/Event Horizon. We especially love the big holo-map and messy organic tentacle beasts. ★★★★★ October 2008



MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES

Sick of telling everyone just how much destruction there is in Mercs 2 (to recap: loads), EA decided to actually *show* people at E3 by letting them loose with tactical nuclear warheads. The setup's similar to an airstrike – paint target with laser, retreat and admire – only this time the target can be as big as an entire village and there'll still be nothing left. The game is finally *nearly* finished as well, so expect the exclusive review next month.

★★★★★ 5 September 2008



❑ You vs. insane space monsters on mining ship of death. Nice one.

ALSO Ice hockey sim **NHL 09** has six vs six online multiplayer confirmed for its equivalent of FIFA's Be A Pro mode, and will be released alongside regular updates **Madden 09** and **Tiger Woods 09** soon – we'll have reviews of all three next month. And look for the unflushable speccy wizard's darkest outing yet when **Harry Potter And The Half Blood Prince** gets its Quidditch on – yet again – this Christmas.



▲ Chaotic four-way tag matches are a TNA Impact highlight.

Midway brings the muscle

Big on brawn, not so much brains

MK VS DC

An ambiguous E3 showing. Good: Batman can throw batarangs, Superman has laser eyes and icy breath. They also pull brutalities – we love Superman pounding Scorpion into the ground, tent-peg style. Bad: Supes has been toned down, Batman feels like an MK fighter. But we want to love it...

★★★★ November 2008



▲ "That's for your review of The Pacifier!" Vin Diesel strikes back.

ALSO **Blitz The League II** continues the series' shtick about being Madden's badder, faster younger brother, with crashing bodies, flying helmets, and career-terminating injuries. **This Is Vegas** cropped up too: the open-world adventure combines racing, gambling, and partying but still looks like a haphazard grab bag of ideas. Still, it's a grab bag that also contains fist fighting and lap dancing, so let's give it a chance.

TNA IMPACT

Faster than WWE Smackdown Vs Raw and with a more simple control scheme, TNA has every chance of winning this year's grap war – if it can eliminate the obvious flaws. For instance, Ultimate X – where grapplers scale ropes and try to grab a large X-sign high above the ring – should be its best match type, but fights last forever because actually pulling the X down once you have your hands on it is too difficult. There's lots to like here, but also lots that needs fixing. ★★★ September 2008

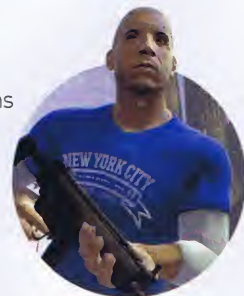


▲ Kurt Angle, AJ Styles, Sting and Samoa Joe want to fight you.


WHEELMAN

The Vin Diesel movie tie-in combines Burnout's takedowns with Pursuit Force's car jacking, Stranglehold's special moves, GTA's star system and Crazy Taxi's graphics... and sadly seems so much less than the sum of those parts. It just isn't quick enough. Plus, driving headfirst into oncoming traffic and not getting wrecked is weird, while making 30 cop cars blow up in the tutorial mission alone is destruction taken to its most illogical conclusions. It's big, but it's stupid big.

★★★★ Winter 2008



Sega slays Dante

 084 DMC beater and Sonic's return front mixed line-up

BAYONETTA

Devil May Cry is dead, long live the angel-slaying witch with a torture fetish. Bayonetta's main weapons are her upgradeable guns, but next to her clock-slowing Witch Time and ability to summon torture devices like iron maidens, they seem tame. Even her hair is deadly, morphing into a huge dragon beast. Every frame is a cocktail of style and insanity.

★★★★★ November 2008



Post-ecological hell war with guns the size of fridge freezers.



STORMRISE

This is the first full-on real-time strategy game for PS3, but the future's not bright – it's brown and barren. After years of people leaving the bathroom light on Earth has suffered environmental catastrophe. Now two races, the gadget loving Echelon and the tribal Sai, battle for control. Using turrets, shields and skills such as mind control and invisibility, you direct all the action from the frontline like a traffic warden of war. ★★ December 2009



SONIC UNLEASHED

By day Sonic is the hyperactive blue hedgehog we all know and love, racing through 3D locations (parts of which are 2D, in a likeable nod towards the Mega Drive classics) like China and Mykynos, but by night he's the beefy, big-fanged Werehog. His new form swaps speed for super strong stretch arms so the action flips from mega speed, rockets, springs and loops, to a platformer that's heavy on the baddie battering. It's the fastest Sonic ever too – collecting rings can boost your speeds up to the equivalent of 300mph. ★★★ November 2008



ALSO Retro remake **Golden Axe: Beast Rider** didn't show off its still unseen fifth and final beast but did demonstrate some flashy dragon summoning spells and kamikaze gnomes. Watercolour wonder **Valkyria Chronicles** was a much more thoughtful affair, proving that mixing RPG and strategy can work. Getting close to **Alpha Protocol** reveals it's Mass Effect with femme fatale spies replacing toad-faced aliens. Yay?

Capcom packs a punch

Sci-fi contenders outdone by old-skool battler



▲ Wrestler El Fuerte is the only newbie we like. Ken still sucks.

STREET FIGHTER IV

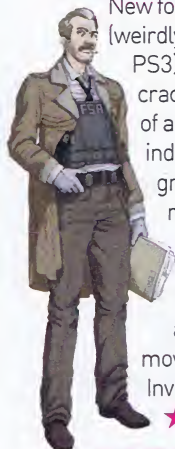
No sign of the PS3 version, but the arcade cabinets were looking super-slick. We're still not convinced about the new characters – especially comedy fat lad Rufus – but that's probably because they lack the same 'goshwowshiny' factor of the other character makeovers. Oh, it's going to be brilliant. ★★★★★ Spring 2009



BIONIC COMMANDO

New footage shows Nathan Spencer (weirdly the third heroic Nathan on PS3) swinging through the cracked concrete streets of an iron-and-rivets post-industrial city using his bionic grappling hook. Aside from reminding us of Spider-Man, it looks *big* – the tumbledown metropolis is deep and wide, and there's a grace and weight to Spencer's movement suggesting the physics are dead on. Inventory swapping looks a pain, mind.

★★★ November 2008



▲ Killzor-3000 failed again to master the human action 'hug'.

DARK VOID

It's early days for this sci-fi shooter: the frame rate's not so hot and it's really brown. Jungle and alien architecture levels are promised, though, and it mixes standard third-person shooting with full flying (developer Airtight did *Crimson Skies* and it shows). Plus, a clambering mechanic has you leaping sideways and upwards between ledges, shooting dudes and dragging them as you go. ★★★ TBC 2009

■ Jet packs: Great for battling UFOs. Murder on your trousers.



ALSO Grin – the team behind Bionic Commando – is confirmed for a tie-in with Angelina Jolie action nonsense **Wanted**, while PSN effort **Age Of Booty** will offer eight-player pirate strategy. Yarr. Or, more probably, narr. **MotoGP 08** is the official game of the new season, featuring a range of handling options, from amateur to "Hi, I'm Casey Stoner." Finally, **Flock** is an animal herding sim, made in Dundee.

In the mood for...

Scientists

Forget cloned super soldiers, the most dangerous men in games wear white coats

Science is responsible for many of our greatest achievements. Space travel, atomic power, Sky+ – none would be possible without our brave boffins. But it's a small step from inventing the iPhone to making notes like "subject screams as I apply electrodes" or knocking a vial of bird flu off the lab bench. Obviously nobody goes to uni to study Armageddon (Theory and Practice); it's just what happens when a planet-sized intellect gets overexcited. On PlayStation, the academic roll call reads like Dr Crippen's Facebook friend list, and it's often the well-meaning Poindexters who carry the heaviest death toll. These, then, are the men who will end us all...

PS
086



Dr William Birkin (Resi Evil 2)

CV reads 1977: joined Umbrella Corp. 1988: Murdered boss, stole job. 1998: Invented G-Virus bio-weapon, sold it to US Government. Got shot, mutated into monster, slaughtered workmates, infected daughter and turned Raccoon City into zombie hellhole. In my spare time I enjoy badminton, socialising and... I'll KILL YOU ALL! Sorry. When do I start?

Dr Ort-Meyer (Hitman)

A deranged German geneticist who fled to Romania where he ran a mental institution as cover for his plan to clone the perfect killer. After numerous mess ups, he finally got it right with Agent 47 – a superhuman assassin with no conscience and less hair who he uses to eliminate all links to the experiment. 47 obliges by also offing Ort-Meyer.



Gordon Freeman (Half-Life 2)

This experimental physicist never speaks, presumably because all he'd say is "I'm so sorry" over and over again. His experiment opened a portal and enabled despotic ETs to enslave humanity. Okay, so he grabbed an armoured suit and smashed alien face with a crowbar but: horse, stable door, bolted?



intermission

A tasty PlayStation snack



Scientist (Timesplitters: Future Perfect)

When these eggheads mention they've "done something terrible" it translates as "we've created a zombie army and a 90ft fire-breathing skeletal horse". Fortunately, you can teach them a lesson when you find one trapped in a test chamber and experiment on him, electrocuting him, say, or stretching his head.



Agnus (Devil May Cry 4)

Look at this lab-coated douche! If anyone should be wearing a "Shhh, it turns out I'm the bad guy after all" T-shirt it's the chief alchemist for the Holy Knights of Sparda – a ginormous, simpering hunchback with a stutter. He's so obviously villainous that when he finally yells "Ah-ha!" and turns into a giant demon beetle you just shrug.



Now have your say

Did we miss any of the evil scientific community off our list? Email us at opm@futurenet.co.uk and let us know. Here are a few that didn't make the grade.

■ **Dr Robotnik**
Sonic's arch enemy might be able to create robot armies but he's disqualified for crimes against facial hair.

■ **Strogg technician**
Enemy Territory: Quake War's alien medic can reanimate dead human soldiers to make new Strogg. Lousy bedside manner, though.

■ **Dr Michael Kaufmann**
The shady doctor from Silent Hill whose involvement in human sacrifice surely compromises his Hippocratic Oath.

Dr Hal Emmerich (MGS)

Sure, he looks boring and harmless but the blood of thousands is on his hands. Why? Because this is the man who designed Metal Gear Rex. *Everyone* who dies in MGS1, 2 and 4 does so because this idiot decided that a 200ft walking robot with a nuclear gun was a *good* idea. After all, what's the worst that could happen? Oh.



lastnext...

Back issues

There's no need to miss out



Issue #019 June 2008

Exclusive MGS4 and Race Driver Grid reviews, new Resident Evil 5 shots, Prince Of Persia first look and Little Big Planet latest details.



Issue #020 July 2008

World exclusive 007: Quantum Of Solace first look, all-new Tomb Raider Underworld shots, the secrets of GTA IV... And meet the real Niko.



Issue #021 August 2008

17-page shooters special, Battlefield: Bad Company review, new Sony boss talks to OPM, and exclusive looks at inFamous, PES 2009 and Resi 5.

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Official Magazine - UK

Reviews

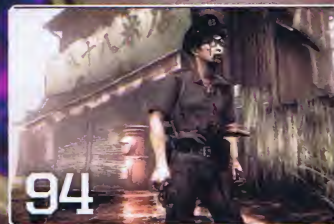
Your essential guide to every new release

You'd think during E3 month when everyone and their cat is looking forward to the games of the future rather than worrying about the games of the now, that actual releases would be a bit of an afterthought. In the case of Hellboy, NASCAR and the not very incredible Hulk, you'd probably be right.

But this is still a strong month for reviews, and we can explain why in two (although it should maybe be three) words: Soulcalibur IV. Quite simply, it's the best fighting game on PS3, and you can read why in wide-eyed detail over the next four pages. Also eye-widening, but for totally different and mostly terrifying reasons, is Siren Blood Curse. Last month we gave it a rave review after playing through the first three episodes. Now we've got our hands on all 12 and OH JESUS GOD it gets dark. Luckily, things are brightened up by Japanese gardening sim Shikitei and Nelly bridge engineer-'em-up (read that back again - yup, that's what it said the first time) Elefunk. All aboard? Toot toot!



90
SOULCALIBUR IV
Namco's weapons master shows Virtua Fighter who's boss in a brilliant PS3 debut. "The lord of hell is no match for my blade."



94
SIREN BLOOD CURSE
We thought Siren was scary last month, and that was before we met zombies with giant fly's wings growing from their heads.



98
ELEFUNK
Design (surprisingly complex) bridges strong enough to support the leathery heft of cutesy cartoon elephants.

How we score our reviews...

Essential
Instant classic that's as close as it gets to PlayStation perfection.

Outstanding
Highly recommended, and an investment you won't regret.

Very good
Mostly excellent, but held back by one or two minor flaws.

Good
Enjoyable, but with definite room for improvement. Rent it first.

Reasonable
A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

Average
A game that is both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

Below average
Too flawed to be anything more than a brief curiosity.

Poor
A seriously flawed game with no long-term appeal.

Awful
A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it as you would a bullet.

Horrific
Buy this shocker and watch your console self-combust in protest.

**GOLD
AWARD**
PlayStation
Official Magazine

Our highest accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics and long-lasting appeal.



Immortal combat

Soulcalibur IV

Namco's sharpened sequel is the best fighter on PS3



Info

Format PS3 **ETA** Out now **Publisher** Ubisoft **Dev** Namco Bandai **Players** 1-2 **Web** soulcalibur.com

It's like Watching a cult martial arts movie with incredible action sequences and a completely inexplicable plot.

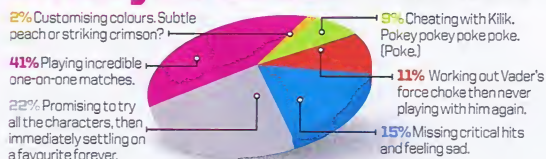
YOU! Yes, you – the one who didn't buy Soulcalibur II, or for that matter, Soulcalibur III. What's the matter with you? Caught up in the hardcore hype about Virtua Fighter offering the most realistic fight experieblah blah SHUT UP. It doesn't matter if the Calibur series isn't as 'deep' – or, more plainly speaking, dull – as Sega's admittedly thorough but basically tedious and over-wrought sim. It's *fun*: immediately, and after a bit, and then after a bit longer. It greets you with open arms, or at least, with sumptuous visuals, gives you a sharp and/or heavy weapon, and provides you with people to use it on. Seriously – what's not to like?

If you've never played Soulcalibur before, the first thing that makes it






immediately different to other fighters is those weapons. Initially they might not seem right: there's some logic to the notion that every time, say, Teutonic tough guy Siegfried lands a blow with his monstrous, shark-sized sword, his opponent should be cleaved clean in two. But it's no more ridiculous than men hopping to their feet having been engulfed in a magical ball of flame in Street Fighter, and what's more the variable range of the weapons gives Calibur a unique tactical dimension. (Unique, that is, with the possible exception of Street Fighter giving Dhalsim elastic arms, which I'm not counting because, a) no other SFII character has a comparable ability, but mostly because b) he's *rubbish*.)

At their most basic, battles of contrasting weapons play out like this: a character with a short-range weapon –

What you do in... Soulcalibur



Timeline Soulcalibur

1997  Soul Blade PS1 PlayStation port of the arcade game, Soul Edge. Featured Tekken-style sidestepping and huge, opponent-clearing jumps.	1999  Soulcalibur Dreamcast The first genuine Calibur saw the introduction of the revolutionary eight-way run, enabling the fluent fighting still present in SCIV.	2003  Soulcalibur II PS2 The first to introduce big guest characters: PS2 got Tekken's Heihachi Michima, Xbox got Spawn. Ha.	2005  Namco x Capcom PS2 Japan-only RPG featuring characters from Tekken, Street Fighter and Dino Crisis. Oh, and Soulcalibur.	2005  Soulcalibur III PS2 The series' first stumble, SCIII added little to the well-established mix except some tarted up graphics and a character creation mode.
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✓ Cassandra dodges a saber blow, which is substantially less deadly in Calibur. Sigh.

Elvis-haired nunchuck pirate Maxi, for instance – faces off against another with a longer piece, like gravel-and-thunder voiced demon Astaroth and his giant stone axe. Predictably, Astaroth's lumbering heft (his primary costume actually has him made out of stone) and the weight of his weapon mean he's far slower than whipping, rolling Maxi. Maxi's best plan of attack is to dart through the big guy's defences and do damage in close, while Astaroth will do all he can to keep his opponent at bay with fat, meaty swings of his cleaver.

Different characters are weighted in subtly varying ways – staff-wielding Kilik has range and speed, but isn't as powerful as the bigger boys, while my favourite, samurai swordsman Mitsurugi, is a bit of an everyman, with power, speed and a fair reach on his katana swing. The crucial thing is that their

"Soulcalibur is *fun*: immediately and after a bit, and after a bit longer."

strengths and weaknesses are all balanced, meaning no single character stands out as emphatically stronger than the others, and your choice of fighter will come down to the way you want to play the game.

Distance and direction

The range system gives fights a natural shape and flow, from the moment you first pick up the pad. It's simple enough to be understood by the greenest of beat-'em-up novices (after a few very painful minutes, at least), but complex enough to add a twist of cat-and-mouse tactics from the off. It also goes some way to avoiding random bouts of button-mashing. But Calibur isn't particularly suited to button-mashing anyway, thanks to its unusually designed control system.

Rather than mapping the face buttons to different limbs or strengths of attack, here they're used for different *angles* of attack, with **△** triggering a vertical strike, and **⊙** a horizontal one (**⊙** is kick and **⊗** is block – more on which later).

Initially, the two might seem interchangeable, but they're absolutely not. The final element to Calibur's fight mechanic – and the ultimate secret behind its back-and-forth fluency – is the eight-way movement system. Unlike other 3D brawlers – particularly fellow Namco title, Tekken – Calibur allows players to move in any direction they chose. You're still locked facing your opponent, but you can sidestep and circle with an ease that opens the game right up. In this context, how you attack becomes another tactical choice. ▶

❑ "Oh no, some of my clothes have fallen off!"
Xianghua bears the brunt of a Siegfried special.



❑ Pirate maniac Cervantes looks to split Ivy into pieces of eight. He's slow, but horribly powerful.

Vertical strikes tend to be more powerful, but they can be sidestepped, and if you're fighting a quicker opponent you'll want to throw in some slashing horizontals to stop them getting through your guard. Equally, if you're a nippy short-range specialist you'll be looking out for big vertical swings which will leave your

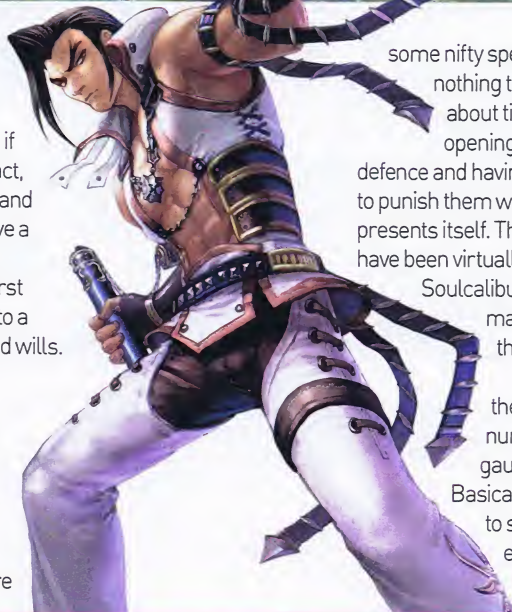
enemy open for a sidestep-and-dash. Add in throws, blocking and guard impacts (risky offensive blocks which, if timed just at the point of impact, parry your opponent's blows and leave them open) and you have a hugely dynamic and playable fighter. It's accessible at the first point of contact, and builds into a complex battle of patience and wills.

Time attack

The most impressive thing is that getting good doesn't just translate as 'learning all the 20-string combos and juggling opponents to death like flaming skittles'. There are

some nifty specials to be learned, but nothing too intricate. It's more about timing, about working openings in your enemy's defence and having the right moves to punish them when the opportunity presents itself. These basic mechanics have been virtually unchanged since Soulcalibur II, and if it's not been made obvious already, they're quite brilliant.

Less convincing are the additions bolted on for number IV – the soul gauge and critical finishes. Basically a system designed to stop people blocking endlessly and to force them on the offensive,

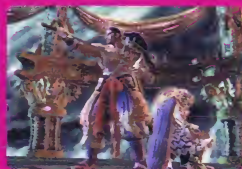


Five modes to play



ARCADE

Classic coin-op style single-player. Fight through several rounds of enemies before taking on the boss, in this case floaty feathery king Algol.



STORY

Like Arcade, but with more focus on your character's backstory. Did you know Vader was drawn through a portal by the power of the Soul blades? Us neither.



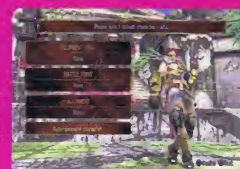
TOWER OF LOST SOULS

The closest thing Calibur gets to a campaign. The idea is to climb a tower, fighting opponents on every floor and unlocking gold, weapons and equipment along the way.



VERSUS EXTRA

Normal Versus, but with all the special skills and bonuses activated. If you've spent ages tweaking your custom character, here's where you show him off.



CHARACTER CREATION

Take an existing character and make him pretty! Or really, really ugly. Customise featured fighters with gear won in the Tower mode, and fiddle with their skill stats.



▲ Ivy beats down newcomer, Algol, apparently the strongest ever Soulcalibur fighter. You go girl.



▲ Nightmare gets in a flaming first attack on Talim. We like our enemies well-done.

the soul gauge is a coloured ball resting on your health meter which gets sad and red if you're taking a battering, and happy and green if you're cracking heads. Absorb too many blows – especially by uninterrupted blocking – and a piece of your armour will smash, opening you up to a fatal critical finish (a mash of all four buttons together just after the 'KSHH!' noise of your broken clothes falling off). The damage you receive is point-specific, and can either be high, middle or low depending on where the blows are concentrated. This lends some depth, but doesn't change the fact that blocking is a skilful ingredient of the best and tensest fights the game plays host to, and by discouraging it for style purposes Calibur undermines one of its key strengths.

Like it or not, though, you'll have to get the hang of the soul gauge if you want to complete the single-player campaign mode, which this time is called the Tower Of Souls. Here you pick a character – or sometimes more than one – and fight a

Some we made earlier

The fruits of our time in character creation mode



ISABEL

Our very first stab at character creation inevitably turns out slightly gaudy, but with some colour co-ordination and the addition of a fur-lined collar we have ourselves a winner. Welcome to the world, Isabel...

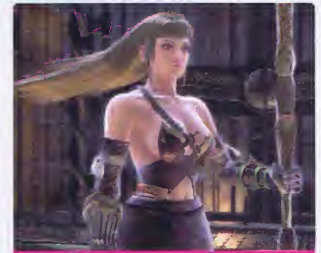
Based on	Cervantes
Weapon	Firangi
Best feature	Excellent hat
Design brief	'A sort of gothic Lolita figure with big eyes.'
Does she work?	Kinda



DAVE

In retrospect, a poor name for a character who deserved better. The idea behind Dave is an armour-polished egotist – which explains the silver and gold plate combo and his high-pitched nasal whine.

Based on	Mitsurugi
Weapon	Two-handed sword
Best feature	Smashing hair
Design brief	'A shiny medieval medallion man.'
Does he work?	Yes



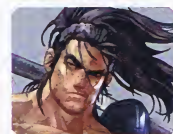
ARIANE

Swapping the sexes is one of the joys of SCIV's custom set-up. Ariane is what Kilik would look like if he were a lady – a lady with spiked gauntlets, metal swimwear and mad, staring eyes with too much liner.

Based on	Kilik
Weapon	Embrace of souls
Best feature	Gold leaf bikini
Design brief	'Xena: Warrior Princess' leaner, meaner daughter.'
Does she work?	Like a fly with one wing

Castlist

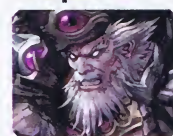
The samurai



Mitsurugi

This honourable samurai is cool, stern and deadly. A good choice for novices.

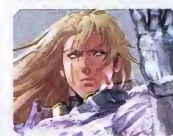
The pirate



Cervantes

Boss pirate from the earlier Caliburs, now just a rotting Spanish seadog.

The hero



Siegfried

Murders a lot of people for a 'hero', but you can't argue with that hair.

The misfit



Vader

Marketing dollar makes for worst crossover ever. You're not welcome here!

"It builds into a complex battle of patience and wills."

tag-team of up to three enemies. Each fight represents a floor of the tower, and they get tougher as you get higher, with some opponents only defeatable using ring-outs or critical finishes. Overall, it's a more engaging way to grab some single-player practice time than an arcade or story mode, and switching characters in and out to conserve their energy keeps the tension high, but the difficulty spikes are crushing and can leave you repeating the same set of floors over and over.

Fix-a-fighter

More successful is the overhauled character creation. It's better for two reasons. First, because the colour of every item of clothing or armour given to your character can now be changed, with hundreds of shades to choose from. This might sound frivolous but it prevents the gaudy jumble-sale look which was the inevitable outcome in SCIII (and besides, who wants to deal death in a clashing scarf and epaulets?).

More importantly, your custom creations are now always based on existing characters, who retain their move set but can be fitted out with different costumes and weapons. At its simplest, this is a cool way to dress your favourite character how you like, but it also allows

for greater customisation than it first appears. Each piece of weaponry and clothing carries with it a skill point value which can be spent on special abilities (things like automatic countering and throw reversal) which become active in the enhanced versus mode. High-level items are unlocked by advancing through the Tower, and so in effect by powering through the single-player modes you can level your character up before taking him or her online (and as the move sets are also standardised, nobody can cry foul about unbalanced match-ups).

And this is why the character creation works: it recognises that the real draw of the game is human-versus-human fighting, and builds towards enhancing it. As immersive as the experience of playing against AI characters is, you soon learn that it's essentially practice for the ongoing, limitless challenge of taking on real people. At which point, this becomes an obsession that sucks away your every waking hour. Real players make real mistakes. They get nervous. They sense weaknesses. They fake each

other out, bluff and double-bluff – and in the world of Soulcalibur IV, they can do it beautifully, on the sharpest fighting experience on PS3 bar none. Virtua what?

Nathan Ditum



2up
second opinion

Name Tim Clark
Angle Soulcalibur fanboy

I banned myself from doing the main review due to a complete lack of perspective. I've been obsessed with the series since it first appeared on PS1, and everything I loved then – liquid silk movement, instantly accessible moves, epic voiceover man – is still here. The new stuff, like critical hits and character tagging, adds to the core game. Only the kind of person who sends food back for being 'too tasty' would complain.

Best for...
Basing your whole life around





❑ "I'm a lumberjack and... OH SWEET CHRIST ON A HONDA!"

**GOLD
AWARD**
PlayStation.
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Terror encore

Siren Blood Curse

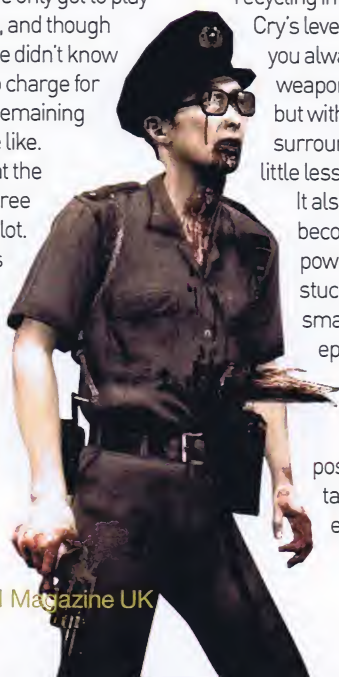
Sony's online horror show gets bigger and better

Wait, what's this? Isn't this the same download-only survival horror remake that we reviewed last month, only with different pictures and a slightly higher score? There's no tricking you, sharp-eyed readers (unless there is, in which case – we reviewed a game called Siren last month. It was really scary). The reason's simple. Last time out we only got to play the first three episodes, and though we liked it very much we didn't know what Sony was going to charge for the game, or what the remaining nine episodes would be like.

The good news is that the price is great – £5 for three episodes or £20 for the lot. The even better news is that the remainder of the game plays a lot like the opening three episodes, which is to say it's still an inch-by-inch creep through a pitch-black, blood-drenched Japanese zombie village

accompanied by a feeling of constant terror. That said, as things progress there is a little more action – or rather, a little less crawling in shadows weeping gently. This is to do with player confidence. A handful of central locations – the hospital, the graveyard, the mines – are played through multiple times using different characters. It never feels like cheap recycling in the mode of Devil May Cry's level backtracking, because you always have different weapons and mission objectives, but with a better sense of your surroundings the shadows are a little less daunting.

It also helps that the weapons become gradually more powerful. Early on you're stuck with blunt objects and small blades, but later episodes feature heavy axes, shotguns and even a scoped hunting rifle, making it not only possible but positively fun to take on several shambling ex-villagers at once. But



Castlist Exchange Student



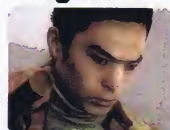
Howard Wright
Received a weird message telling him to travel to Hanuda. Regrets it now.

Helpless Kid



Bella Monroe
Separated from bickering parents Sam and Melissa, and lost in the woods.

Danger Doc



Dr Seigo Saigo
Resident at Hanuda hospital, Seigo has a husky voice and a hunting rifle.



Info

Format PSN download **ETA** Out now
Pub Sony Dev Sony **Players 1** Web
snipurl.com/2ep5t **It's like** Finishing
a book that you had to put down
because it was too scary.

it's important not to get too comfortable, and *always* to remember that downed shibito enemies revive themselves after a few minutes. That's a handy tip I picked up while wading knee-deep through the cramped corridors of a flooded Hanuda house, where, thinking I had the all-clear, I turned to find a shrieking shibito *this* close to my face, and had to stop playing for a few minutes while I calmed down.

Blood bath

Not that it helped – one thing about the shibito is that they definitely don't get any less terrifying. Quite the opposite – past episode three the basic 'vanilla' shibito (shrieking, murdering, bleeding from the eyes) gives way to a whole range of increasingly monstrous insectoid abominations. At one point Melissa Gale – the cable TV presenter and mother of little lost Bella – is tracing her daughter's



❑ The reason that Japanese teens hate visiting their grandparents.



❑ Guns put down shibito in one shot, giving you short relief from the terror.

path through the hospital. The level starts as ever with a quick sightjack scan of the nearby enemies, only this time something weird's going on – all the split-screen images are upside down. When I played it, it took me a few seconds of anxiously cycling through the shibito in the area before I realised that they were all clinging to the ceiling. Eventually two sentries crossed paths and I saw one of them through the other's eyes – a spider shibito, bent backwards on all fours with arms, legs and head all cruelly twisted and set at the wrong angle. Without spoiling anything, things only get worse from here.

If it all sounds extraordinarily scary, well, it is. But there is a little ray of sunshine in the shape of Siren's excellently designed archive and map. Accessed by pressing **SELECT**, this is available from the beginning but really comes into its own after a few hours' play. The archive does a lot of the storytelling (useful, because the main game doesn't get much clearer after a confusing start) by giving you access to dozens of collected items – notebooks, driving



❑ The scary thing is, this is as friendly as the shibito get, before they start growing wings.

licences, that sort of thing. These can be examined and give clues as to how the various characters have ended up in Hanuda, and the events in the village before everything went all evil. The map, on the other hand, is the most comforting thing in the game. Marked out in isometric 3D, it makes finding your next objective easy, and makes sure that the chilling atmosphere's not spoilt by frustrated blundering in the dark.

So, Siren is every bit as good as we thought it could be having played the first quarter. It's all available online right now, lasts as long as a standard game (around 10-12 hours) and costs just £20. What are you waiting for?

Nathan Ditum



BluMovies

HD films to feed your next-gen disc player



Be Kind Rewind

Director Michel Gondry **Starring** Jack Black, Mos Def **ETA** Out now

A video store clerk and his crackers pal are forced to remake a raft of Hollywood hits when a freak magnetising mishap wipes the shop's tapes. The problem is that these bring-your-own-blockbuster bits are so funny – especially the net-plastered Ghostbusters riff – that they leave the rest of the film feeling flat.



All The Boys Love Mandy Lane

Director Jonathan Levine **Starring** Amber Heard, Michael Welch **ETA** Out now

Stylish photography and a hot cast save this otherwise average teen slasher from by the numbers plotting and a ballbag ending. Mandy Lane returns to school extra-sexified after the summer break and kicks off a deadly game of kiss-and-chase on a weekend ranch retreat.



27 Dresses

Director Anne Fletcher **Starring** Katherine Heigl, James Marsden **ETA** Out now

The lovely Katherine Heigl is the perennial bridesmaid who is far too scared to admit her true feelings for her schmuck boss who – no! – is about to fall in love with her even prettier sister. If only there was a cynical (but adorable) wedding columnist for her to marry instead. Utterly predictable, then. Needless to say, we definitely did not cry.



Movie of the month Batman Begins

Director Christopher Nolan **Starring** Christian Bale, Liam Neeson, Cillian Murphy **ETA** Out now

Bale brings the Bat back to basics in this grim series reboot, pouting meaningfully through the orphaned adolescent bits before breaking arms manfully as the schizo nightstalker. The result is tough and smart, and probably the best comic book caper Hollywood's churned out since, er, the other Batman.



Head
to
head

Wall-E vs Kung Fu Panda

It's a CG grudge match between the summer's big kids' blockbusters

PS3

In Pixar's latest, poor little Wall-E is the last robot on Earth, left to tidy up the kebab wrappers after humanity does a bunk. Then along comes love in the suppository-shaped form of ladybot Eve.



STORY



Imagine Karate Kid, only everyone's a bit furrrier. The ubiquitous Jack Black voices a podgy panda named Po, desperate to leave his life of noodles for Kung Fu fame.

Forget Pixar's trademark animation. What you get instead is 2D scenery, jagged edges and washed out cut-scenes. Worst of all, on PS3 Wall-E has all the charm of a broken fax machine.



GRAPHICS



Obviously not a pixel perfect recreation of the film's CG, but every inch of the levels has been given love, and there's enough colour splashed about to make it feel like you're in a Bravia ad.

Most of the puzzles involve doing boring things with rubbish and trying not to fall into holes. Also, slowly wheeling Wall-E across the brown landscapes is about as much fun as a trip to the tip.



GAMEPLAY



Like all good cartoons it's all about violence, but when you're not leaping about happy-slapping boars there are ballistas and roller coaster-style tracks to create variety.

The movie's lack of dialogue in its opening half is groundbreaking. The game's identical approach is simply dull. For a game based on a Pixar property to feel this charmless is borderline criminal.



LAUGHS



Love him or hate him, having Jack Black ham up every cutscene and shout "bodacity" as the chubby panda spirals through the air gives the kiddie comedy a little extra kick.

LOSER

We'd be less angry about the dull puzzles if it looked anything like the movie, but this is more market stall knock-off than genuine Pixar merch. Sorry, little guy...



PlayStation
4



VERDICT

WINNER



PlayStation
7

Pixar has undoubtedly made the better movie, but on PS3 Po kicks Wall-E straight into the recycling bin. It's a fine example of how licensed games *should* be done.

EDGE

NINTENDO | SONY | MICROSOFT | PC | HANDHELD | COIN-OP | ONLINE

**Resident Evil 5,
Gears Of War 2,
Wii Sports Resort
and the best of
the rest of E3**

**Plus: the evolution
of LittleBigPlanet,
the world's biggest
videogame arcade
and inside Diablo III**



XBOX 360 REINVENTED

**The exclusive story behind Microsoft's
plan to change the way you play**

Issue 192 on sale now





Pachyderm puzzler

Elefunk

Love (and lots of steel) can build a bridge

Id like to apologise to all the physics teachers I've ever studied under, even the one that smelt of sulphur. I never thought I'd need those equations and diagrams about stress strain curves that you tried to teach me, but I was wrong, and now herds of cartoon elephants are paying the grim price.

It should be simple. All you have to do is make a bridge for elephants to walk across, using some bits of virtual Meccano. But a few metres in and the whole thing is collapsing, sending my little leathery charges to their doom. Yes, it's sad, but it also serves 'em right – I told them not to rush me, but they had to keep holding up signs saying, "Hurry Up."

A bridge too far

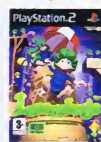
Don't be fooled by the cute elephants – this is puzzling at its most brutal. It's not enough to bang a line of girders together

– every point of your bridge has to be supported properly, and you only have a limited amount of pieces to use. Sure, it's satisfying bashing together girders and blocks like a poor man's Isambard Kingdom Brunel, but you need to use proper planning smarts too, and that's what makes it so addictive.

And for that, there's testing involved, the sort of testing which makes you nervous that PETA will appear at your doorstep at any moment. The only way to be sure whether your bridge will work is to hit **START** and watch the Nellys waddle across. Sure, there are plenty of games that are packed with tension, but not many of them threaten to murder an elephant if you get something wrong.

The trick is to watch every collapse like a morbid city planner, checking where the breaks happen and making mental notes about links which need reinforcing.

Like this? Play these



Lemmings
You still have to build bridges, but at least the Lemmings help.
VERDICT 6



Worms 2 Open Warfare
As cute as Elefunk, but this time you get to destroy the scenery.
VERDICT 8



Info

Format PSN download **ETA** Out now
Pub Sony **Dev** Bbit Games **Players**
1-2 **Web** snipurl.com/2tx6l **It's**
like Being the worst Greenpeace
volunteer ever.

Easier said than done, especially since it's hard to concentrate when you're lying face down on the floor throwing a kiddie tantrum: when your bridge is crumbling this is perhaps the most infuriating game ever created. But then again, when the mammoth structure you've knocked together actually stays together it's the best puzzler on PSN.

Just when you start getting the little lumps across safely, though, everything changes. On the second level you stop making straight bridges and build Marble Madness-style tracks for the elephants to roll down instead. Strength isn't such a

▲ "It's okay, I've checked with the RSPCA. This is absolutely fine."



concern because it won't have to hold for long, but plotting a route is essential because there are golden tokens to collect. New materials and new hazards like leaping piranhas are constantly introduced, keeping you going through the whole nerve shredding business again and again.

It's on these more complicated levels that Elefunk's only real problem becomes apparent. The tutorials are basic at best. They only teach you how to put the pieces in place, leaving you with nothing but trial and error when it comes to making them stay up. I'm not asking for a master class in structural engineering, but more hints and tips might make the learning process a



▲ This rickety bridge looks like it's been built by two-year-olds with paper and Pritt Stick.



▲ The elephant just looks at it and it crumbles like a tackled Italian forward.

"Don't be fooled by the cute elephants – this is puzzling at its most brutal."

little less humiliating.

However, just when you're on the verge of launching into a full Gary Busey flip-out and eating the Sixaxis, along comes the an Evel Knievel-style bonus level to pull you back in. It's another simple set-up – a ramp, an elephant perched on a motorbike and huge gaping ravine. You have to shake and tip the Sixaxis to set the boost power and the correct angle of the jump, and then launch the little guy towards the abyss. The idea is to hit a giant platform marked with a bull's eye on the other side of the screen, but watching your victim fly through the air is enough to keep you

entertained wherever he lands. A few sessions of death-defying aerobatics (or just death) and you're relaxed and ready to start building again.

Rounding out the package is a Jenga-style two-player mode, where you each take turns to remove sections of a bridge until it collapses (a harrowing if enjoyable way to introduce children to the danger of playing on building sites). Skilled

Elefunksters will also enjoy showing off via the online leaderboards. A PSN must-have, then, even if it means you can never watch Dumbo again.

Rachel Weber



PlayList

Essential tunes to download this month

Beck Chemtrails

Format Track ETA Out now Price £0.79

The lead single from Beck's new Dangermouse-produced LP, *Modern Guilt*, is quite a departure from anything the boho pop chameleon has produced before – which is saying something considering his eclectic past. It's a misty psychedelic lament of thrumming bass and clattering beatnik drums that recalls Pink Floyd at their most epically zonked. myspace.com/beck



Joe Lean & The Jing Jang Jong

Format Album ETA Out now Price £7.99

Foppish indie beanpoles squeeze into super skinny jeans and turn out anthemic jangle-rock to make Razorlight fans go all weak at the knees. Lead singer Joe Van Moyland is also an actor, and played Sophie's brother in *Peep Show*. myspace.com/joeleanandthejingjangjong

Black Kids Partie Traumatic

Format Album ETA Out now Price £7.99

Florida pop quintet follow up their sweet *Wizard Of Ahhs* EP with a full length CD that almost justifies the hype. Wistful indie pop meets gleaming disco and Motown rhythms, and if it's a little bit thin around the edges at times, the likes of Hurricane Jane are packed full of enough effervescent joy to carry it off. myspace.com/blackkidsrock



Download of the month

Ida Maria Fortress Round My Heart

Format Album ETA Out now Price £7.99

A Stockholm punk with a brutal fringe, this girl plays rough, hollering how she's "as drunk as can be" on *Louie*, or making brash romantic offers on *I Like You So Much Better When You're Naked*. The delicate *See Me Through* reveals a more sensitive side. myspace.com/idamaria





Monster failure

The Incredible Hulk

Barely credible would more accurate

We're past the point of hoping these superhero tie-ins will be anything other than an outrageous waste of everyone's time, right? The Incredible Hulk seems to have given up entirely. The game's major selling points are that it's open world – playing out in a blocky, lo-res version of Manhattan – and that the Hulk can destroy everything. There are two main problems with this. Firstly, breaking stuff is barely any fun at all. For whatever reason – because the Hulk's a terrifying gamma ray-fed monster, maybe, or perhaps because all the objects around him are held together with papier maché and the sweet dreams of children – everything he so much as breathes on combusts instantly. Brush up against a wall and – CRUNK! – it



erupts into a cloud of dust and debris. Jump over a copse of trees and – FLASH! – it explodes in a flurry of leaves and wooden limbs. And it's not even pretty destruction, either, but a mess of pixellated smoke and truly terrible deformation graphics. One mission had me smash a building to bits, at which point it fell *into* the ground, making me feel like I was playing a shonky 3D version of Rampage. Clichéd though it sounds, these occasions really do leave you staring at the screen open-mouthed at such half-hearted, clueless design.

Hulk gash


The second problem is that the open world setting doesn't feel alive in the same way that, say, Liberty City does. You can wander anywhere you like, and there's literally minutes of entertainment to be wrung from the Hulk's Crackdown-like ability to scale huge buildings (before you realise there's none of the sparkle or design innovation of that 360 title, and all that's waiting for you at the top is a foggy view of the city thanks to Hulk's myopic draw distance). But the city environments are drab and square, and decorated



▲ The Hulk looks to the heavens, presumably hoping for a way out of his stupid, stupid game.



▲ Stuff explodes at the slightest touch. Here, a street burns after the Hulk breathes on a car.



Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub
Sega Day Edge Of Reality Players 1
Web web.sega-europe.com/hulk/en/
It's like A moody green toddler going mad in Early Learning Centre.

with blurry satirical billboards presumably intended to add a splash of GTA-style colour but which actually just make the comparison even more painfully acute.

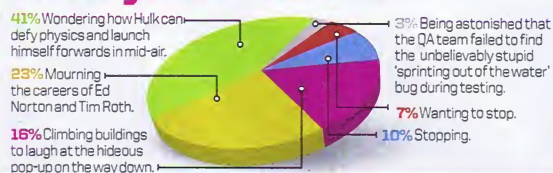
The missions don't help, either. Again the system is nabbed from GTA – they appear as coloured circles on the map and are activated as you walk into them – but the lack of variety and side missions makes the world feel lifeless and sparse. Basically, all the missions involve using Hulk's limited routine of broad-stroke combos to batter repetitive waves of military bad-guys. It gets old real quick.

The ironic silver lining is that the huge underlying design problems which arise constantly make the game's bugs and lack of polish something of a

non-issue – but that's hardly going to be a bullet point on the back of the box. The Hulk is ugly, outdated, and from the look of some sections, maybe even unfinished.

Nathan Ditum

What you do in... Hulk





Look at the pretty roses, not the fields past the walls. YOU MUST NEVER LEAVE!

Flower power

Shikitei

PS3's first (and probably last) gardening sim

The closest I've ever got to horticulture was accidentally 'cultivating' some jam tarts by leaving them in a kitchen cupboard for six months. The end result – a red and orange mushroom cloud of sugar-encrusted mould – was in equal parts spectacular and terrifying. For those wanting to partake in similar horticultural experiments without the obvious health risks, the Japanese PlayStation Store has this gentle gardening sim, a way to indulge your inner Titchmarsh without risking bankruptcy, nettle stings or a wide-eyed Charlie Dimmock asking you to give her Begonias a quick prune.

Select an environment – a Japanese or English-style walled garden – and off you go, controlling a cursor to add and remove plants, flowers, trees and furniture. When you're in design mode, it plays out from an overhead perspective; when you're just watching your garden grow, you can take a first-person view, walking around as though you're playing an oddly peaceful FPS, albeit with none of the 'S'. Naturally the lack of an English language option is a barrier, but you can still get by using trial and error.

Nice bush

It's all so pleasant that you'll feel inclined to bust out the picnic hamper and Pimm's – if you're

Info
Format PSN download ETA Japan import Pub Sony Dev Sony Japan Studio Players 1 Web.jp.playstation.com/scei/title/shikitei It's like The Sims, given a Ground Force makeover.



Red trees and a glorious blue sky: relaxing, beautiful and utterly pointless.



sufficiently self-motivated to stick with Shikitei for long enough to work up an appetite. The key thing to remember is that this is a 'game' in the very loosest sense of the word – while it's exceptionally pretty it's also devoid of any real goals, other than to enjoy the view. Even so, as an

interactive screensaver it's a diverting curiosity, particularly at 1,500 yen (about £7). Still making a 'meh' face? Jam tarts it is, then. **Ben Wilson**



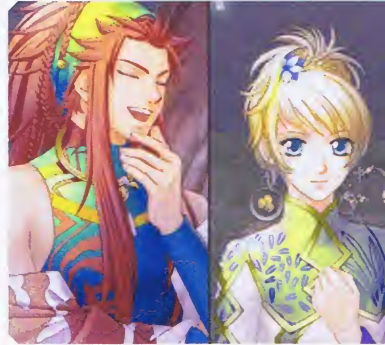
Japan Watch

This month's overseas action in a nutshell

Harukanaru Jikuu no Kade 4

Format PS2 Pub Koei Subtitles No

Ashihara was a normal high school student until, one day, a mysterious man informed her that she was a princess from another world. Taking normal girls and propelling them through time and space to fight monsters and date minor royals, this long-running series hasn't run out of ideas yet.



Afrika
Format PS3 Pub Sony Subtitles No
Who wants to shoot animals from the back of a Jeep... with a camera? Does this explain why Sony's safari-flavoured photography game has no UK release yet? [Strokes panda-pelt waistcoat wistfully]



Bumpy Trot 2

Format PS2 Pub Irem Subtitles No

Looking like the disarmingly cuckoo offspring of Fiddler On The Roof and Gundam, this sequel to Steamboat Chronicles melds another batch of hardy rural types in oatmeal waistcoats with charmingly non-lethal mechs whose plasma death drills have been replaced by fishing rods, fire hoses and parasols. Almost too cute to bear.



Exotic Boxart Of The Month



Slotter Up Core 10 Mach GOGOGOG2
An object lesson in videogame turd-polishing for the ultra irrelevant pachinko also-ran. Note the groundless hyperbole: 'GoGoGo'? YesYesYes!



Pachi-Slot Ridge Racer
Love Ridge Racer, but put off by all those cars, tracks and beautiful 1080p graphics? Then your confused little prayers have just been answered.



Medical 91
This predictably melodramatic cover for a PSP medical adventure contains a genuine mystery. What is that fleshy thing on the left? A gut? An arse? Is it wearing headphones?

games radar.

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(and news, previews, reviews, features, videos, screens etc)



Circular argument

NASCAR 09

Days of blunder

Over in the southern half of the US, in cities with names like Joplin and Owensboro and Unadilla, the good ol' boys love them some NASCAR. And frankly, that's the only explanation we can muster for the fact that this long-mediocre stock car series has been going for over a decade. Clearly unwilling to break the circle of banality, NASCAR 09 is another below-par racer that makes turning left every five seconds exactly as exhilarating as it sounds.

Good news, though! I did manage to squeeze a good two hours of (minor) enjoyment out of NASCAR 09 before I finally succumbed to its marginally-better-than-PS2 visuals and total lack of soul (forget big race atmosphere - fans stay motionless throughout and crewmen are so devoid of excitement that they might as well be directing you via Stephen Hawking's voicebox). Much of that time was spent honing a purple and black, sponsor-covered, flame decaled beast. The customisation options are neat, but after carefully putting together my dream car, I was bored of driving it within six laps.

Turn, turn, turn

The turning left every five seconds thing wasn't just a cheap shot, either. For as many as 500 (FIVE HUNDRED!!!) laps, all you do is accelerate, brake, and turn left. Again and again. Sure, that's as much a criticism of the sport itself as it is of

Info
Format PS3 ETA Out now
Pub EA Dev EA Tiburon Players
1-16 (online) Web easports.com/
nascar09 It's like A Sisyphian
nightmare in which you repeat
the same dull task endlessly.



EA's presentation is typically slick, with the expected gamut of real drivers and liveries.



Imagine seeing nothing but this for 300 laps. Welcome to NASCAR 09, kiddo!

the game, but the real gripe is that the developer has done precisely nothing to make this more appealing to the masses. And the AI is so robotic that even NASCAR nuts are likely to want out in record time.

If you want an exciting PS3 racer, get hold of a copy of Race Driver Grid or Burnout Paradise. And if you've got an inexplicable desire to drive around in circles until blood leaks from your ears, there's always the M25.

Ben Wilson



Straight to bargain bin

With Nathan Ditung



There's one good idea in **El Tigre: The Adventures Of Manny Rivera**, and it's not the neverending loop of mindlessly jing-jangling mariachi music which acts like some kind of dampening field for happy thoughts. No - the good idea is that rather than taking away a limited amount of lives, the game instead adds up all your deaths, presumably because the controls are twitchy like a tasered alcoholic and if it totted up fatalities conventionally the average session would be over in a heartbeat. As it is I died 83 times in my first 10 minutes - that's 8.3 times per minute, mortality fact fans, or around once every seven seconds - no doubt partly thanks to my aging reflexes, but mainly because of platforming difficulty spikes that can be seen from space and which stopped me playing past minute 11.

I'd have thought the main reason for having moronically oversized tyres bolted to your car would be that they'd give you more traction than regular ones (otherwise you'd be the motoring equivalent of people who wear proper hiking shoes to go shopping, and therefore a style-dyslexic cretin). Not so according to **Monster Jam**, in which your freakishly proportioned idiot truck slides around all varieties of road surface like a fat bear on ice. It's not that the racing's bad - in fact it occupies that difficult zone of mediocrity which makes it hard to summon the energy to decide either way - it's just that the game's threadbare physics engine is totally unequipped to deal with the minimum speed the trucks have to go in order to stop players falling asleep.

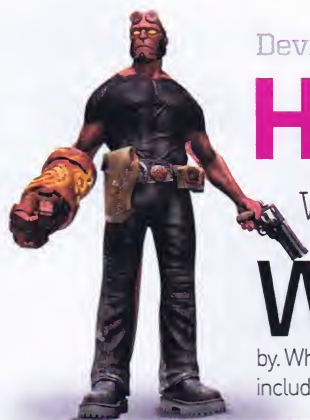


According to some forums I found which understand poker better than I do [flashback to smoky room, tears welling up as I remove the last item of clothing and the laughter starts], **World Championship Poker Featuring Howard Lederer: All In** is the pinnacle of PS2 card sharking. That doesn't change the fact that the world of poker is a depressing place, a fact reinforced seconds in when my randomly generated in-game avatar turns out to be a suicidally anxious middle-aged man who looks like he lives in his mother's basement. That's why Howie's sis, fellow gambler Annie Duke, has been roped in to glam up the box, and also why the ability to see your online opponents using the Eyetoy is the worst idea ever.

Abomination of the month

The epically bad box art caused excitement amongst my colleagues, until I told them **The Water Horse: Legend Of The Deep** is a kids' movie cash-in rather than an original idea conceived by a developer during a nervous breakdown. The basic structure is that clips from the film, in which a lonely boy takes home the unhatched Loch Ness monster, trigger small bursts of hideous looking gameplay. Like rhythmically pressing buttons to make the stupid seal thing do somersaults in the bath, using ← and → to make it turn in a barrel, and sneaking through your garden, which is inexplicably full of soldiers. The best bits were when Angus said "jings!" without a trace of irony, and when it crashed shortly afterwards. Like a mercy killing.





Devil's work

Hellboy The Science of Evil

Weak combat, worse puzzles... Maybe he's red with shame

When you've got a face like an Easter Island statue, leading man roles are hard to come by. Which is why Ron Perlman's CV includes Captain Skunkbeard in *Scooby*

Doo, and why he lobbied so hard to play Hellboy. Still, as much as he loves the character, this is an embarrassment.

As in the comic-based movie, Perlman plays the demon spawn-turned-occult investigator. His big sell is the Right Hand Of Doom, a massive stone fist used to pummel through witches, lizard men and evil midgets. Lazy button mashing combos unleash your flaming fist, but they're slow to stack up, and in the vital seconds it takes to hit **△**, **△**, **△**, **△** there's every chance you'll catch a werewolf paw in the kisser.

Hella bad

The boss fights aren't much better – they're badly signposted and frustrating. One time I spent ages grappling with an apparently immortal gorilla, but later a giant worm-beast went down like a sickly kitten.

The level design feels old

Info

Format PS3 ETA US import Pub
Konami Dev Krome Studios Players
1-4 Web konami-data.com/hellboy/
It's like Hell on Earth, but boring.

skool, and not in a nostalgic, 'I heart the '90s' way. Ghost barriers block off areas until you smash up a set number of foes; your mighty arm can smash through walls and doors, but only at designated points, and only if you hold **R2** and hammer **△** until your thumb goes into spasm. It's the same story with puzzles, as if making you throw an exploding head at something 100 times is a substitute for one original obstacle. In the Okinawa

mission you repeat the same

lantern lighting puzzle every few feet. If I was looking for that sort of fun I'd play with a light switch. After an hour of this demonic dross, it'd be a step up. **Rachel Weber**



❑ Bashing demons with a giant glowing arm: sadly, it is many, many times less fun than it sounds.



Initial D Extreme Stage

Format PS3 ETA Japan import Pub Sega

Sega's street racing games based on the Initial D anime have been tearing up Japan's arcades for the best part of a decade. Extreme Stage features 28 drift-heavy events all based on rivalries between the upstart boy racers (mostly a direct result of girlfriend/car envy), as well as a Garage mode where you can get into an oily mess of car modification. Driver rivalries also provide the basis of Extreme Stage's multiplayer, which is capped at a measly-sounding two-player online. But the Initial D games are all about driver-versus-driver battles, and

Extreme Stage is the tidiest console version yet.

Jonti Davies



Monster Madness Grave Danger

Format PS3 ETA 5 September Pub South Peak

Monster Madness wants to be a kid friendly Dead Rising but ends up just dead on arrival. Play as an irritating tweenager and use homemade weapons on the endless waves of demons, werewolves and psycho Chihuahuas. Whether you fend them off with a bucket or a shotgun, the clunky controls make it feel like a soul sucking chore. Creations like a granny monster who throws cats and hands out spankings show glimmers of brilliance, but they're dragged into a suffocating

ooze of obtuse controls and repetitive button bashing.

Rachel Weber



Pro Cycling Season 2008

Format PSP ETA Out now Pub Focus
Peddling through depressingly weak Tour de France stages is made worse by the fact you manage a team, rather than focus on a single rider – removing any real sense of personality. Combined with the haphazard controls, this is a truly punishing experience.

4 Milly Clark

Space Invaders Extreme

Format PSP ETA Out now Pub Square Enix
One of the first shoot-'em-ups out of the digital swamp gets glammed up for PSP, with smart new features such as boss battles, explosive aliens and trippy Rez-style audio. For once, it's a brilliant update of a genuine classic.

9 Kim Richards



Dragon Ball Z Burst Limit

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub Atari

Burst Limit is the 348th Dragon Ball Z game to date, but marks the series' first appearance on PS3 – and damn, it looks good. Crisp, richly coloured characters slugging it out with flashy attacks and dramatic throws make for fast-paced, meaty action that looks and feels true to the mad anime.

Combos are simple, which makes the action immediately satisfying. Ultimately the fighting does get repetitive though. Even triggering 'drama pieces' (mini cut-scenes that unleash status effects) gets stale after a while. So it's not going to be enough to convert non-Ball Z fans,

but those in the know will feel right at home.

Kim Richards





❑ The clam-hoarding, rival-pounding gameplay is fast, frantic, and funny.

Monkey business

Hail To The Chimp The Presidential Party Game

Forget Brown and Bush, and vote baboon

Chances are, if someone asked you to play a game featuring political satire and chimpanzees, you might be forgiven for screaming, vomiting, and scratching out their eyes. And you'd fit right in because that's exactly what you do in Hail To The Chimp.

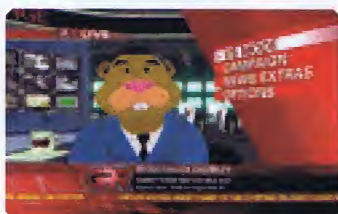
The setup goes like this: the lion has disappeared, so all the other animals decide to fight it out to become the new king of the jungle. You play every aspect of the election (as different characters) through ten mini-games. In each, four candidates enter an arena (viewed in a Calling All Cars-style top-down perspective), then fight over clams (!) which are used to win the round. In some games you have to deliver them to fatcats as a bribe, in others you simply have to collect as many as possible. We're not sure what the clams represent in this political allegory (votes? Public confidence? Clams?) but it doesn't really matter. Just find them.

Junglist massive

You can whack your opponents, or team up with other candidates for a special attack (although you split any 'profits' from this) and that's your lot. The arenas all have individual quirks and the candidates are distinct, but solo play can get a bit repetitive after a few rounds. You'll keep

Info

Format PS3 ETA US import
Pub Gamecock Dev Wideload
Games Players 1-4 Web
chimplove.com It's like The
country has been taken over by
primates. Pretty realistic, then.



❑ The 'GRR News' coverage – including adverts and footage – is genuinely funny.

playing though, just to see each event being covered by GRR News – a fictional channel stuffed with amusing unlockable video clips, campaign spots, interviews and in-jokes, most of which do political satire better than anything you'll see late night on BBC2.

Where this really shines is in offline multiplayer – with you and pals teaming up on the leader, stealing clams and ballot machines at the last moment. It's great, chaotic fun. There's also the option for online play, and victoriously swaggering about as a big blue hippo in front of strangers takes some beating.

Factor that in alongside HTTP's ability to keep bringing the laughs and this a pleasant, if somewhat hairy, surprise. **Rich Stanton**



Release Schedule

Coming soon to a
PlayStation near you

	Publisher	ETA	Format
Madden NFL 09	EA	15 Aug	Multi
Brothers In Arms Hell's Highway	Ubisoft	22 Aug	PS3
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	EA	Aug	Multi
Wipeout HD	Sony	Aug	PSN
Facebreaker	EA	5 Sep	PS3
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	EA	5 Sep	Multi
Alone In The Dark	Atari	Sep	PS3
FIFA 09	EA	Sep	Multi
Leisure Suit Larry Box Office Bust	Sierra	Sep	PS3
Monster Madness: Grave Danger	South Peak	Sep	PS3
NHL 09	EA	Sep	Multi
Pure	Disney	Sep	PS3
Rise Of The Argonauts	Codemasters	Sep	PS3
SBK 08: Superbike World Championship	Black Bean	Sep	PS3
Silent Hill Homecoming	Konami	Sep	PS3
SOCOM Confrontation	Sony	Sep	PS3
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	Activision	Sep	PS3
Tiberium	EA	Sep	PS3
TNA Impact	Midway	Sep	Multi
Tom Clancy's Hawk	Ubisoft	Sep	PS3
Valkyria Chronicles	Sega	Sep	PS3
Ghostbusters	Sierra	3 Oct	Multi
NBA 09: The Inside	Sony	3 Oct	Multi
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	Rockstar	10 Oct	PS3
Dead Space	EA	31 Oct	PS3
Fallout 3	Bethesda	Oct	PS3
Far Cry 2	Ubisoft	Oct	PS3
Fracture	Activision	Oct	PS3
Lego Batman	Warner Bros	Oct	PS3
Little Big Planet	Sony	Oct	PS3
Motorstorm Pacific Rift	Sony	Oct	PS3
NBA Live 09	EA	Oct	Multi
Prototype	Sierra	Oct	PS3
Saints Row 2	THQ	Oct	PS3
Tom Clancy's Endwar	Ubisoft	Oct	PS3
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	Sierra	Nov	PS3
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	EA	Nov	PS3
Mirror's Edge	EA	Nov	PS3
Resistance 2	Sony	Nov	PS3
WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2009	THQ	Nov	Multi
Killzone 2	Sony	Feb 09	PS3
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	THQ	Mar 09	PS3

! All release dates are accurate at time of press but liable to change.



READY MADE EXCUSE #21

Pull a sickie for... Brothers In Arms

"I've got a wart that needs slicing off. It's huge, like an extra hand growing out of my back. The doctor says it'll take at least a week to scab over..."



▲ The Heavy in this equation doesn't stand a chance. Headshots are deadly.

Bastion of greatness

Team Fortress 2

The Orange Box delivers another online treat



Info

Format PS3 **ETA**
Out now **Pub** EA
Dev Valve **Players**
2-16 **Web** orange.
half-life2.com/tf2.
html **It's like** Your
cartoon fantasies of
what you'd like to do
to Kill3:57 brought to
sick, animated life.

The Heavy up ahead presents a problem. He is half-a-ton of sulking Slavic muscle wrapped around a Gatling gun. The tip of which is pointed at you; a lowly Scout; a midget to his incredible bulk. "Bugg-hah." Behind him, a friendly Spy materialises, a masked and suited superhero. In his right hand is a flick-knife. He backstabs. The Heavy falls. As a final flourish, the Spy turns and waves his dagger like Zorro, giggling. He is clearly enjoying himself – until a Pyro appears from behind him, and lets rip with his flamethrower at point-blank range.

Online – and make no mistake, this

multiplayer fraction of the already incredible Orange Box can *only* be played online – Team Fortress 2 offers a very different kind of thrill to standard shooters. The clue is in the title. Victory is entirely dependent on teams who play as a unit; who talk, learn and adapt.

Game on

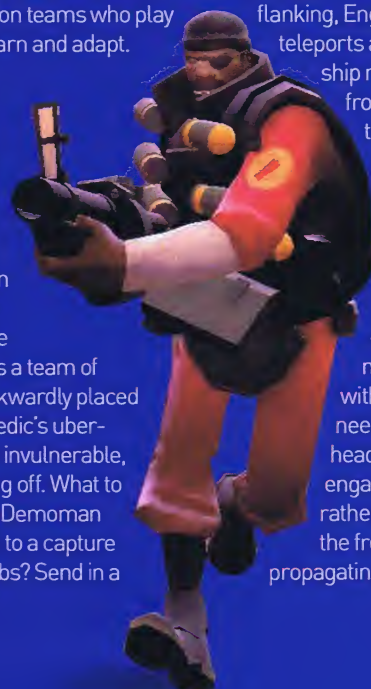
It's a test, not just of snap-headshot skills (although those who settle into the Sniper class will discover that reflexes honed on Call Of Duty 4 *will* be tested) but of absolute groupthink. How does a team of eight deal with an awkwardly placed sentry? By using a Medic's uber-charge to turn a Pyro invulnerable, and let the bullets ping off. What to do about an irritating Demoman who's mined the path to a capture point with sticky bombs? Send in a

Soldier. His rockets can scatter grenades.

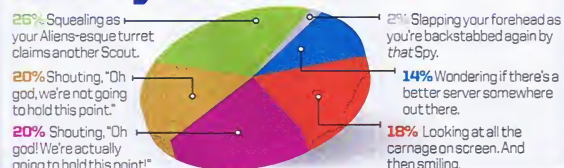
At its best, it is magical: teams clustered together, Heavies leading the charge, Soldiers behind, Scouts flanking, Engineers assembling teleports and dispensers to ship new recruits to the front line, Snipers at the back, picking off stragglers...

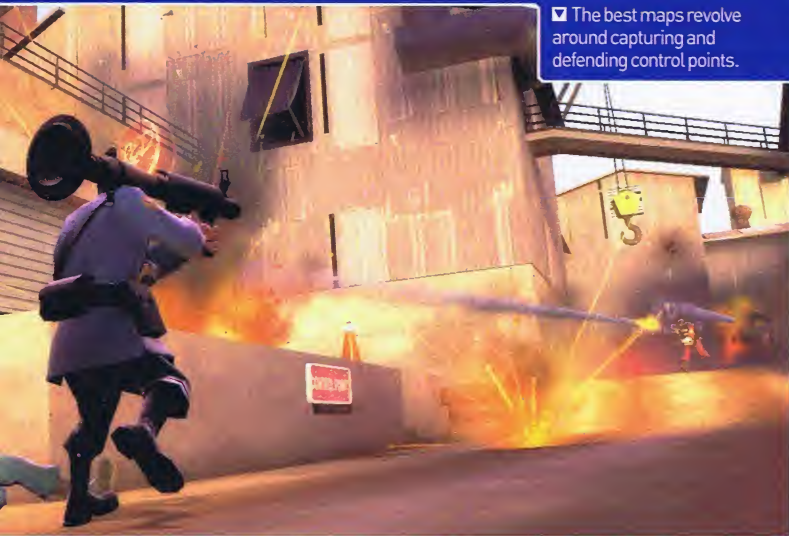
Who's there?

But here is the problem. To create these steamroller experiences, players need to be interacting with each other. They need to use their Bluetooth headsets. They need to be engaged with the objective, rather than hanging around the front of their base, propagating pointless duels. This



What you do in... TF2





▼ The best maps revolve around capturing and defending control points.



▲ The best bit of TF2? The incredible expressions on your teammates' faces.

can dampen your spirits and tame TF2's wild exuberance.

It took a good few days of searching through some near empty servers (the auto-matchmaking seems to favour dumping you in smaller groups, rather than filling out already well populated games), through players clearly enjoying themselves but still figuring out the intricacies of classes, but eventually I did find it: the near mythical perfect game.

Over Team Fortress 2's tiny selection of maps (five in all, of which two – Hydro and Granary – are rarely played) we battled. On 2 Fort we raided each other's basements, dashing home with vital enemy intelligence. On Dustbowl we fought for territory, gradually pressing toward a final victory point, the reds desperately holding on for survival, blues pouring through the cracks and entrances. On Hydro, we lost each other in twisting ravines and

corridors, stealing each other's control points. On Gravelpit, we held on for dear life – splitting our defence in two, knowing that holding dual control points was hopeless – but still managed to keep the reds out of our huts to run down the clock. It was the perfect game, not because we won. No. That's not important in TF2. What matters is the taking part, that hypnotic rhythm of attack and defence that sees the hour hand on your watch spin through the night.

You should already own Team Fortress 2. It's the far right option on the menu screen of the Orange Box (which scored 9/10 in issue 14). So don't take this review as a recommendation to buy. Take this score as a demand that you put the game back into your PS3 and start playing TF2. Yes, it's a tough learning curve, and yes, you will die a lot. But keep playing. Those Heavies aren't going to backstab themselves.

Tim Edwards



Online round-up

With **Leon Hurley**



Turns out blowing stuff up is fun. Who knew? And it never gets dull in **Battlefield Bad Company**. Trees blocking your view? "Boom!" Hi-explosive topiary. Can't be bothered to walk around a house? "Ka-blamo!" Magic door. The downside is if you're

inside a building as it's flattened to the ground. After all the bombastic war-torn game-related horrors I've been through, all this FPS had to do to induce post-traumatic stress was let a teenager from Kent blast holes in the cottage I was hiding in with an RPG. Shame there's only one game mode – a territorial fight between two teams over gold – but until I get bored with grenade launchers it'll do.

I'll never play **Buzz! Quiz TV**. But I'll check MyBuzzQuiz.com to see what quizzes people are making. It's my new 'state of the human race' barometer. Take merlinpants, July's most prolific quizmaster. He's got an odd range of tastes with categories including Dexter: Serial Killer TV Series and High School Musical. Wait, what? Elsewhere, get past the Football and Star Trek trivia and there are some gems. Like Chuck Norris Facts: "Chuck Norris can *what* a revolving door?" Answer: "Slam." There are potentially risqué topics too, like booze – "What drink goes with Red Bull?" – and even hot summer lovin'. Can you guess the question that goes with the answer, "5.7 to 5.9 inches"?



Playing **Civilization Revolution** online is like shouting "Hello!" into a tunnel and waiting for an echo that never comes. It works; there just aren't many



people playing a socio-political turn-based society management sim. After sending out messages to get a game I've made a crucial discovery, though: humanity is doomed. You can do anything to win – build a world bank, establish the UN, travel into

space. So what does everyone do? Create huge armies and wipe every other culture off the map. These are tomorrow's leaders remember. It's basically all over. Can the last one left turn out the lights?

Download of the month



Everyone loves free stuff. Especially if it's something useful – and this is far, far better than a sachet of Head & Shoulders falling out of your Sunday paper. For a big fat zero pounds you can download the **Metal Gear Solid 4 Database**, an essential Metal Gear Solid wiki. Everything from the original MSX titles to the latest game is covered – but don't worry, if you haven't finished Metal Gear Solid 4 yet, all the related content is blocked to stop any annoying spoilers. There are massive charts detailing character relationships, comprehensive bios, a full MGS encyclopedia and timelines, plus everything's hotlinked so you can skip easily from one topic to the next. Which is handy as my attention span is... Ooh, shiny!

mail@opm



GTA: Manchester, more angry rockers, our secret O.C. shame, an ex-Xboxer writes, and why reading OPM is the path to career success.

★ Northern uproar

Grand Theft Auto 5 should be set in England. In fact, it needs to be! The first option that comes to mind is London... but I'm sick of London. It seems to be the only city in England these days! So let me pitch my idea to you: Manchester! Imagine running down urban alleyways, hopping into gardens and being chased by chavs. Imagine English police officers! And I presume you guys hate Manchester United – just imagine throwing a grenade into the Theatre of Dreams! And instead of the bloody jazz-

From PlayStation hopes and fears to technical queries, this is the place to come for answers

Email us at opm@futurenet.co.uk or write to Letters, OPM, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

playing buskers in GTA IV you could walk through downtown watching breakdancers or freestyle footballers! As John Lennon once said, Imagine. One difference between me and him? He probably didn't have any good ideas for GTA 5.

Carl Griffiths by email

We initially thought this was idiocy, but... imagine the soundtrack! The Stone Roses and Happy Mondays are in, obviously, but we also want a station that plays only Joy Division and The Smiths. (Miserable Manc FM?) So yeah, nice idea. Enjoy a free subscription to the mag on us. Oh, and you're right about Man United.

Rock off

To be blunt, I think it is absolutely disgusting that we in the UK are being ripped off over the price of Rock Band compared with the USA. I cannot understand the necessity of a staggered release on the 360 and then PS3? The PS3 version is available in America, so why not here? When I first heard about Rock Band, I was really excited, but the price puts me off, and I'm now considering not bothering with the game, and hoping that Activision doesn't screw us in October with Guitar Hero: World



■ We predict a riot over Rock Band's exorbitant pricing.



■ Has anyone else spotted more GTA IV car looky-likes?

Tour. The pricing is out of order, and the excuses are feeble – 17.5% VAT does not lead to double the price, and if America can get instrument and game bundling why can't we? I'm boycotting Rock Band in an attempt to force EA to lower the price and have set up a Bebo group to gain support (bebo.com/do-not-buy-rock-band). If people don't buy, EA will have to lower the price.

Nick Green, by email

Ridiculously, Rock Band 2 will be out on PS3 in the US this September. It also remains unclear, no doubt deliberately so, exactly who's to blame for the Euro price. EA? MTV? Harmonix? The French? Somehow? The big question is, will Activision be bold enough to sell its rival, Guitar Hero World Tour, for less? Our hearts say yes, our heads say not by much, and our fingers say maybe we should just forget the whole thing.

Ring out

Just thought I'd drop you a line to say that I'm enjoying the magazine. I've been an Xbox 360 user until recently so I'm a bit of a newbie to the world of PS3. My reason for changing? The dreaded 'Red Ring Of Death'. After hearing many horror stories, I had the full blown experience myself just before Christmas. Even

What's on my hard drive



Jamie Prevelt, by email

Music

Avenged Sevenfold, Bullet For My Valentine and Korn at the moment.

Photo

Mainly cars – Nissan R34 GTR Z Tune and R32 GTR Skylines – plus some Uncharted wallpapers.

Video

Mainly trailers – all the MGS4 ones and Resident Evil 5 (cannot wait for it!)

Game

MGS4, Race Driver Grid, Ratchet & Clank, Gran Turismo Prologue and Uncharted: Drake's Fortune.

Friends

My work colleague and pal Ronnie. (Most of my friends haven't got a PS3.)

Tell us what's on your hard drive! Email us at opm@futurenet.co.uk

though the shop replaced the console, it still felt as though I was playing Russian roulette every time I turned it on. Whilst deciding what to do, I bought your magazine to read up on all things PS3. Needless to say, I'm a convert. Going from an Xbox 360 to a PS3, you immediately notice the differences between the two. Reading your magazine over the last couple of months though, I've felt that you've helped to inform and guide me through any software or technical queries that came to mind. It's made the swap far more enjoyable.

Robert Hughes, by email

Ignore the Judas cries. You've absolutely made the right decision. It's like Sol leaving Spurs for Arsenal. (Wow, how many more sets of fans can we upset?)

Mini Mischa

After all the talk of different Lego games in letters from other issues, I was wondering what you would think about a Lego The O.C. – or, even better, an actual The O.C. game.

Nathan Deakin, by email

In theory we'd be 'pro' the idea, but can't help wonder what gameplay based around teenage alcoholism, Sapphic experimentation and listening to Death Cab For Cutie would actually involve. Still: Lego Rachel Bilson. Triple sigh.

Riding dirty

After reading your 'Return to Liberty City' article in OPM20 I thought I'd share with you a photo of my clapped out VW Passat and an identical car from GTA IV (see pics on left page) Even the rims are the same! As unflattering as my motor is, all my mates laughed at the comparison so I thought I just had to send it in.

John Price, by email

According to Rockstar each car in GTA IV uses multiple real world sources for inspiration. Must've done this one at 5.25 on a Friday, eh boys?

School daze

This letter was originally going to be an epic moan about why all the high profile games have been released during the time in which students are trying to revise. I have been successful in keeping myself from buying either GTA IV or MGS4 and completely ruining my exams, although my adventures in Oblivion's Tamriel have increased significantly over the past few weeks. However, having come back from a last-

Who needs qualifications when you can be a knight?

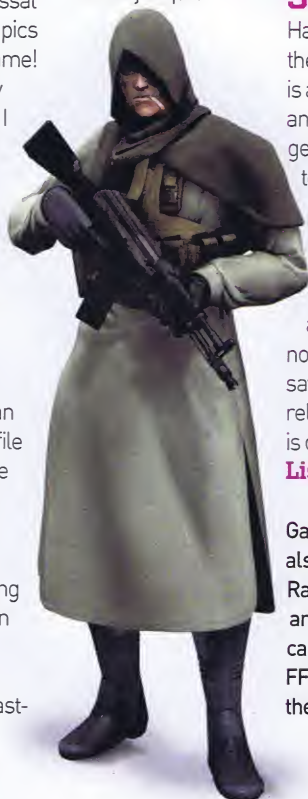


Ask SONY

Q If I delete a game's initial install file, can I still access the saves if I want to reinstall the game later?

A Game install files and game save files are independent of each other, so you can delete install files and still use the original save once the game has been reinstalled. This also means you can take your saves to use at a friend's house.

Is Snake's swansong so good that other devs should just quit?



minute entry into a business exam I have to take back my original opinion. Having blagged the first half of the test, the final question was, in a nutshell: 'Should Apple enter the video games industry?' Thankfully, through years of playing games rather than doing homework I managed to cram so much information into the answer it would make one of the Elder Scrolls look like a pocket guide to Didcot. I would also like to thank the writers of this magazine for enabling me to digest this information and (hopefully) to pass the exam.

Patrick Shiel, by email

Everything the education system taught us has been lost like tears in the rain. These days the only sort of memories we can even retain are how best to customise an MP4 SOPMOD carbine and which players develop really well in Pro Evo.

Solid work

Hats off to Hideo Kojima and his team, they promised and they delivered. MGS4 is a modern day masterclass in gaming, and it begs the question: what did Hideo get so right? Is it that he was dedicated to one powerful console? The only problem now is that this will become the benchmark all others should strive for. If developers ask whether their new title is of the same quality and find themselves with the answer no, then don't insult us PS3 owners and save your development money by not releasing that title. The PS3 revolution is officially here!

Lisa Thompson, by email

Games developed purely for PS3 – think also Uncharted, MLB 08: The Show and Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction – are the real proof of what the console is capable of. Add to that list the likes of FFXIII, inFamous and Resistance 2 and there's plenty more magic to come.

Off the Wall



Choice cuts from the OPM Facebook group



Rock legends?

"Are Coldplay really what most Guitar Hero players are looking for? Where are the monster licks and shredding solos?"

Iain Wilson



Life coach

"Go on the dole and spend all day sat around in your Cheesy Wotsit-stained grundies playing PS3."

Martyn Powell



Lara love

"Tomb Raider is once again realistic, and we can all sleep soundly in our beds tonight. Hurrah!"

Matt Brown



World war

"Trading in the M4 Carbine for a bolt-action rifle is a no go for me."

Lee Baker



History lesson

"Seriously, kinky female wrestling was all the rage a few years back."

Chris Osborne



Design doctor

"How about a clear, transparent PS3 so we could all see the little Sony elves and pixies making our wonderful machine work?"

John Cole



Metal Gear Ray

"Is it just me, or is it the monster from Cloverfield?"

Steve Bamdad

Send your questions to:
opm@futurenet.co.uk



PS3

Essential collection

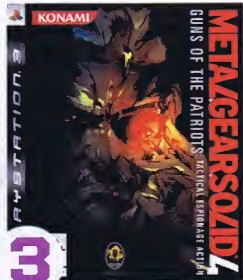
Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games so far



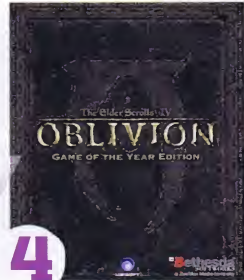
1
Action
Grand Theft Auto IV
It's everything you love about GTA – the twisted characters, epic missions and savage humour – polished to perfection. A true modern masterpiece.
10 Pub Rockstar Games
Dev Rockstar North



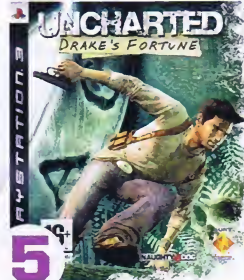
2
Shooter
Call Of Duty 4 Modern Warfare
Take on terrorists as the SAS and US Marines as Call Of Duty dumps WW2 for a contemporary setting. This is a beautiful, brutal and near flawless shooter.
10 Pub Activision
Dev Infinity Ward



3
Stealth
Metal Gear Solid 4 Guns Of The Patriots
A typically esoteric but masterful end to Snake's saga, blending beautifully immersive action with a lifetime's worth of cut-scenes. Divisive but essential.
10 Pub Konami
Dev Konami Productions



4
RPG
Oblivion Game Of The Year Edition
An adventure so vast and all-consuming you'll lose months to its quests and battles. Now with the Knights Of The Nine and Shivering Isles expansion packs.
10 Pub Ubisoft
Dev Bethesda Softworks



5
Action-Adventure
Uncharted Drake's Fortune
Treasure hunter Nathan Drake is after the fabled gold of El Dorado in this superb blend of action and puzzles. Think Gears Of War meets Tomb Raider. Then buy.
9 Pub Sony
Dev Naughty Dog



6
Platformer
Ratchet & Clank Future Tools Of Destruction
Platforming royalty return to save the galaxy. Exquisite graphics and a riotous arsenal of comedy weapons make this the pair's best interstellar outing yet.
9 Pub Sony
Dev Insomniac Games



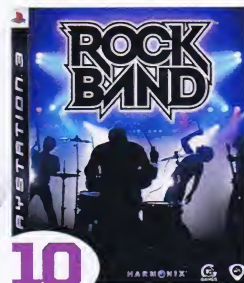
7
Racer
Race Driver Grid
Straight from the TOCA garage and into first place. It's the smooth mechanics, aggressive races and fine tuned cars that make this the best racer currently on PS3.
9 Pub Codemasters
Dev Codemasters



8
Music
SingStar
Sony's much-loved karaoke game steps up to next-gen with a neater interface, online options and tons of tunes via SingStore. Outkast's Hey Ya and Killers' Mr Brightside are highlights.
9 Pub Sony
Dev SCE Studios London



9
Multiplayer Combat
Warhawk
Endless dogfighting fun and the best multiplayer currently available on PS3. Up to 32 players can battle on massive maps with a wealth of weapons, plus ground and air vehicles.
9 Pub Sony
Dev Incog Inc



10
Music
Rock Band
Sing, strum or pound your way to living room superstardom with 45 licensed tracks from Radiohead's Creep to the Stones classic Gimme Shelter. Groupies not included.
9 Pub EA
Dev Harmonix

PS3
Celebs



Stranglehold
Chow Yun Fat is Inspector 'Tequila' Yuen in John Woo's glossy dove-molesting shooter.



Guitar Hero III Legends Of Rock
Even if you beat Slash in battle, you'll never pull off that hat.



The Godfather The Don's Edition
Marlon Brando mumbles from beyond the grave as head of the family, Vito Corleone.



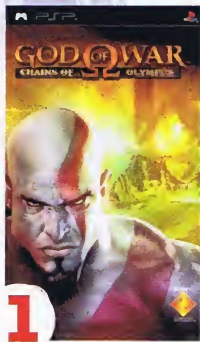
Grand Theft Auto IV
Fashion eccentric Karl Lagerfeld is the DJ on K109 The Studio while Ricky Gervais can be found performing at the Split Sides comedy club.



PSP

Essential collection

Ten indispensable games for your handheld - try them or buy them, just make sure you play them



1

Action-Adventure
God Of War
Chains Of Olympus

Bloody, god-slaying prequel that matches the PS2 games' vibrant visuals and frantic hack and slash action.

10 Pub Sony
Dev Ready At Dawn



2

Strategy
Final Fantasy Tactics
The War Of Lions

A genuinely gripping plot, delicious-looking visuals and the oceanic 'job' system make this the best Fantasy so far.

10 Pub Square Enix
Dev Square Enix



3

Platformer
LocoRoco

Tilt a 2D world to guide a growing, smiley-faced blob to safety while sugary Japan-o-pop tickles your ears. Rolls all over Me & My Katamari.

10 Pub Sony
Dev SCE Studios Japan



4

Free-Roaming
Grand Theft Auto
Vice City Stories

Everything you'd expect from GTA, only smaller. Compelling missions on foot or behind the wheel, plus plenty of '80s tunes.

10 Pub Rockstar
Dev Rockstar Leeds

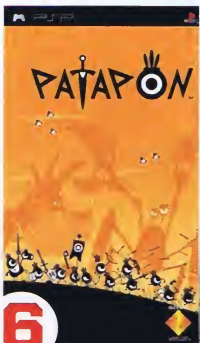


5

Puzzler
Lumines II

Move blocks and clear the screen to a brilliantly eclectic soundtrack. New features and modes improve an addictive fusion of music and puzzling.

9 Pub Buena Vista
Dev Q Entertainment

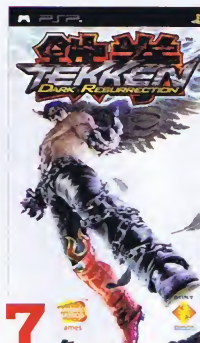


6

Rhythm
Patapon

Scrolling 2D battles with a side order of crazy. Control your army of eyeballs with different drum beats, taking on rival tribes and huge monochrome monsters.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Pyramid/Interlink



7

Fighter
Tekken
Dark Resurrection

With stunning looks, loads of mini-games and new moves, this offers some of the best multiplayer action on PSP.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Namco Bandai

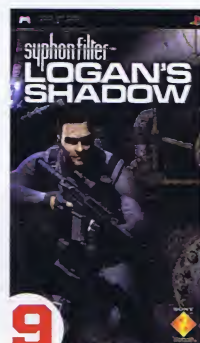


8

Platformer
Ratchet & Clank
Size Matters

The duo's handheld debut is a platforming riot. Upstairs weapons and compelling levels make this a must-have hit.

9 Pub Sony
Dev High Impact Games



9

Stealth-Strategy
Syphon Filter
Logan's Shadow

A top-class stealth sequel. Gabe returns with new weapons, new moves and the news that his partner could be a double agent.

9 Pub Sony
Dev Sony Bend



10

Racer
Ridge Racer

Powerslide around a mix of classic and new tracks. A great arcade racer where teasing out a drift while taking a corner at 135mph never gets dull.

9 Pub Namco Bandai
Dev Namco Bandai



111

PSP
Bugs



Spider-Man 3
Arachnid action with added angst. Save the world and a potato-faced Mary Jane.



Crush
If the brain-breaking perspective puzzles don't get you, these giant angry insects will.



Worms
Open Warfare 2
Send your invertebrate opponents to the great compost heap in the sky.



Daxter
Jak's otter/weasel pal hunts these nasty bugs for the Krigger Ridder Extermination Co.

Hi-Def Directory

Ensure your PS3 games and Blu-ray movies look their best with a lovely new HDTV. Go on, you deserve it...

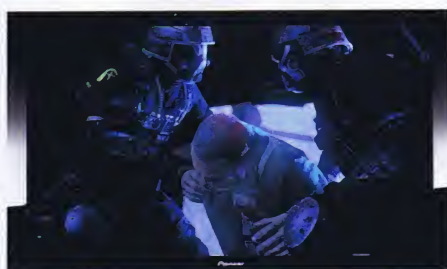
Plasma Best buys



£690*
Panasonic TH-42PX70

This multi-award winning Panny is a superb all-rounder that handles anything you throw at it – and without the leg-crossing price tag associated with plasmas. Not a true 1080p set though, whatever the marketing blah says.

Size 42" **Native resolution** 1,024x768 **1080p** No
Connections 2x HDMI, 1x Component, 2x SCART, 1x PC input, integrated Freeview



£1,443
Pioneer PDP-508XD

Friends, meet our dream TV. She's generously-sized, sure, and didn't come cheap – but *look how pretty!* Part of Pioneer's astonishing 'Kuro' range (it's Japanese for 'black'), we actually don't mind it doesn't do 1080p as it means less upscaling.

Size 50" **Native resolution** 1,024x768 **1080p** No
Connections 2x HDMI, 1x Component, 2x SCART, 1x PC input, integrated Freeview



£4,250
Pioneer PDP-LX608D

Insurance finally paid out after that suspicious fire? Get the money spent quick on the King Of Flatscreens. This huge Kuro is arguably the finest commercial TV around, and delivers the deepest, richest image we've ever seen.

Size 60" **Native resolution** 1,920x1,080 **1080p** Yes
Connections 3x HDMI, 1x Component, 3x SCART, 1x S-Video, 1x PC input, integrated Freeview

LCD Best buys



£410
Sony KDL-32P3020

Not full HD, but at this size you really don't need it to be. This set combines classic Sony style with class-leading picture quality, making it the perfect 'entry level' display for the PS3 owner on a budget. Read: most of us.

Size 32" **Native resolution** 1,366x768 **1080p** No
Connections 2x HDMI, 1x Component, 2x SCART, 1x PC input, integrated Freeview



£730
Samsung LE40F86

Sammy's latest screens pack a range of picture-enhancing tech that gives colours more vibrancy and helps eliminate the jitters when watching fast-moving images as opposed to the hi-def fruit bowls so beloved of Dixons.

Size 40" **Native resolution** 1,920x1,080 **1080p** Yes
Connections 3x HDMI, 1x Component, 2x SCART, 1x S-Video, 1x Composite, 1x PC input, integrated Freeview



£1,450
Sony KDL-52W3000

Best prepare a convincing argument for why you 'need' this monster-sized Bravia before installing it in the bedroom. Less TV, more 2001-style entertainment monolith – it delivers a picture every bit as stunning as its size.

Size 52" **Native resolution** 1,920x1,080 **1080p** Yes
Connections 3x HDMI, 2x Component, 2x SCART, 1x Composite, 1x PC input, integrated Freeview

Essential Blu-ray movies



The Orphanage
Spanish chiller set in a Victorian orphanage. Hessian death-mask children and nasty shocks make for a brilliantly spooky atmosphere.



Ratatouille
The digital source material means Pixar's latest is a show-stopping looker. It's about a Parisian rat who wants to make it as a chef.



Juno
Warm but emotionally wrought comedy about a smart-mouthed teenager who falls pregnant with her goofy bandmate. Loveliness ensues.

FAQ

Do I need an HDTV to play PS3?

Simple answer: no. You can connect your PS3 to almost any standard definition TV using the composite lead supplied with the console. Do yourself a favour, though, and upgrade to a superior RGB SCART lead. However, to see PS3 games in all their glory, we massively recommend getting an HDTV. Don't even consider buying a flatscreen without the 'HD ready' badge, because it ensures you'll get the right sockets to hook up in hi-def.

How does PS3 look on a normal TV?

Even in standard definition, the jump from PS2 to PS3 impresses. You were happy with how your PS2 looked through SCART on a normal TV, right? Assuming you're using the same set-up, PS3 games are going to look that much better because the machine is so much more powerful. More problematic is playing old games on an HDTV, because they have a lower resolution and the image therefore has to be upscaled and processed. The end result can be a smeared, blurry picture.

720p/1080i/1080p... WTF does it all mean?

These are the different flavours of hi-def signal. The numbers refer to the amount of horizontal lines in the picture; the more lines there are, the higher the detail. As for the letters, 'p' means a progressively scanned image, which is more stable and smooth because each frame is drawn in its entirety, whereas 'i' is an interlaced signal that rapidly switches between the odd and even horizontal lines of an image, giving the impression of a full frame. Roughly speaking, 720p is best for fast motion but 1080i suits more static, detailed visuals with 1080p therefore being the best of both worlds and ultimate daddy.

Do I need a 1080p compatible set?

It's certainly not essential. At present, only top-end HDTVs are capable of displaying 1080p, and games that support the signal, such as Ridge Racer 7 and Virtua Tennis 3, are in the minority – but as time goes by that will change. However, there's an argument to say that for anything less than super-sized screens (say, below 46") the difference between 720p and 1080p is actually pretty negligible – and certainly nowhere near the quantum shift you get going from standard to hi-def.

Should I buy an LCD or plasma?

The variation in quality between models and manufacturers means there's no easy answer. LCD screens tend to have higher resolutions (good news if you're after 1080p), are lightweight and cost less at



larger screen sizes. However, the blacks can look slightly washed out and some LCD panels struggle with fast motion. Plasma, contrastingly, deals with motion confidently and delivers rich black and vibrant colours – but the sets are chunkier and guzzle power. There's also a slight risk of screen burn, when on-screen information (such as an energy bar) remains as an afterimage, although the problem isn't usually permanent. Forced to choose? We'd probably plump for a 42" Pioneer or Panasonic plasma. But if you're paying we'll have a 46" Bravia X-series LCD.

How big should my TV be?

Big is always best. You also need to consider the size of your room and budget, though. The size of flat-panel screens mean you'll want to sit further back than you did with your old TV. As a rough measurement, multiply the diagonal size of the screen by three and it will give you an idea of how far away to plonk the La-Z-Boy. So for a 42" screen you should sit it about 10ft back.

How do I make my PS3 run hi-def?

Connect any HDMI cable between your PS3 and your HDTV and the console will automatically recognise it and ask if you want to display hi-def. Say yes, obviously. It should also check the maximum resolution your panel supports, but this can also be tweaked in the display settings menu on the XMB. If you're connecting via Component you'll also need to go into the same menu and select that option under Display Settings, after which you'll be asked to choose which HD resolution to use.

Help, the screen has gone blank!

Assuming everything's on and all the leads are connected, you've probably selected the wrong resolution. Switch the unit to standby and then turn it on by holding the power button for five seconds until you hear a bleep. If an HDMI lead's plugged in the PS3 will detect it. Otherwise it'll revert to the standard AV output using a composite lead.

Getting connected

You've got the hardware, now hook it all up

HDMI

Transmits hi-def video and audio as a pure digital signal – the best possible connection. These don't come with PS3 and will set you back around £20.



Component

These cables deliver an analogue signal capable of carrying hi-def video. Three separate wires are used for the red, green and blue picture information.



RGB/SCART

This is used for the standard audiovisual connection. It's analogue-only, but provides a crisp and clear picture that will serve you well. It won't deliver that hi-def crispness though.



S-Video

This splits the analogue video signal into chrominance (colour) and luminance (light), resulting in a better picture compared with a standard composite lead.



Composite

Bog-standard analogue signal. Picture quality is fuzzy and prone to colour bleed. It's also the lead you get in the PS3 box. Cheers! Do yourself a favour: upgrade immediately.

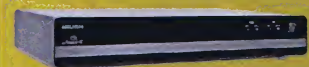


Optical

This is a laser-powered, audio-only connection used to send digital sound to your TV or home cinema amp for deep bass and crystal-clear effects.



HD choice



Bush BFSAT01HD Freesat box

The digital set top box that, partnered with a Freesat dish, provides easy access to the free satellite services from BBC and ITV, including HD broadcasts. No subscription required.

Price £120 Channels 80+ Stockist argos.co.uk
Resolution Upscales to 1080i Website freesat.co.uk



There Will Be Blood

A huge performance from Daniel Day-Lewis anchors this dark, unsettling oil epic. Large on ideas, small on sentiment, and beautiful to look at.



Blade Runner: Final Cut

Tech-noir thriller with Harrison Ford hunting down robot people in a neon-bathed future LA.



The Prestige

Blu-ray lights up the sumptuous Victorian setting of this smart thriller about two magicians locked in a deadly rivalry.



Eastern Promises

David Cronenberg's predictably brutal take on the Russian mafia in London, starring a never-better Viggo Mortensen.

who is...

Captain Price

#18
PLAYSTATION
LEGENDS
PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

Call Of Duty 4's mustachioed alpha male

One moment in the Ultimatum mission defines Captain Price. "I was starting to think you were gonna leave me behind," says Griggs, as he's rescued by the SAS. "Yeah, I was, but your arse had all the C4," barks Price – the hardest man in the hardest fighting force in the world. Is he joking? Put it this way: throughout COD4 the dry, murderous practicality of the SAS is a stark contrast to the hoo-rahing mindset that gets half of the Yanks blown up in a nuclear explosion, and Price is the dryest man on the team.

Finest Hours

The Boat

After giving you hell during your initiation, Price babies you through your first real mission, slotting bad guys with such precision you barely have to do anything. And when you're one leap away from a watery grave, it's his hairy face you see hauling you into the chopper.



Chemobyl

The amazing flashback to Price's early career has you crawling through a tank battalion, shooting down a chopper and carrying a wounded officer through enemy lines. Price even seems unfazed by the radiation, possibly because he's got Old Spice for blood.



Saving Nikolai

After hooking up with some 'friendly' Russians (as in they don't shoot on sight), we find out their leader, Kamarov, owes the SAS boys for a previous snafu in Beirut. Minutes later Gaz is dangling him over a cliff as Price looks on impassive.



The Finale

Zakhaev stands triumphant, pumping bullets into your team-mates as they lie concussed from an explosion. You're conscious – barely – but you don't have a gun... until Price slides you his M1911 for the final act of vengeance. Heartbreaking.



Friends and foes

Imran Zakhaev

The Russian ultra-nationalist who secretly engineers a coup in the Middle East to distract attention from his own war. That's thinking.



Khaled Al-Asad

After shooting you (via the eyes of deposed President Al-Fulan) directly in the face, it looks like Al-Asad's going to be the game's main villain... Until Price blasts him in cold blood.



Gaz

Price's veteran sergeant gets most of the best lines – until he's tragically blown up by a tanker and then shot in the head during the game's dying moments. We miss him most of all.



Sgt 'Soap' MacTavish

Price's story is seen through your eyes, as an SAS recruit. At first you're just another FNG (the second two words are 'new guy') but by the end a trusted member of the team.



Preferred kit

M4A1

Closely related to the M16 family of carbines, but Cpt Price's modded version comes with an underslung grenade launcher, suppressor and a red dot sight. Tasty.



M1911

A Colt-engineered design classic, the 1911's been in every COD and in general military use since World War One. A feeble seven-shot clip makes this Price's last resort.



M82

A .50 cal beast that'll blow a man's arm off from more than a mile away, the only downside being that you really need to be lying prone to fire it.



Capt. Price trivia



He isn't the first Price to appear in COD – an SAS hardnut with a similar moustache appeared in the first two games. Fans say they're dad and son.



Price was voiced by Billy Murray, who you might remember from such roles as DS Beech in The Bill and Johnny Allen from Eastenders.



He has happy memories of his SAS mentor – when you support Kamarov's men, headshots make him mutter 'MacMillan would be impressed'.



The SAS give their members more leeway than regular grunts, and Price is no exception – his beloved boonie hat is standard issue for US soldiers.



He's presumed dead at the end – you see a medic giving him CPR, then pounding his chest – but producer Grant Collier refuses to confirm this.

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(HE'S THE ONE ON THE RIGHT)

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THE RATCHET AND CLANK STORY CONTINUES, BUT WITH A SPY THEMED TWIST. PACKING A DEVASTATING SELECTION OF NEW WEAPONS AND GADGETS,
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